

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Self Help Guide

This booklet is designed to help you improve your symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome by making changes to your diet and lifestyle

This booklet was given to you by:

Name:

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What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is the term used to describe a collection of symptoms that affect the bowel. Symptoms vary between individuals and can change within the same person. Many people report symptoms are relieved by opening the bowel. The most common symptoms are pain and altered bowel habit including:

- Diarrhoea and/or constipation
- Bloating and wind
- Passing mucus (jelly like substance)
- A feeling of urgency to go to the toilet
- Feeling the need to open the bowels even after having just been to the toilet
- Symptoms are sometimes worse after eating

Other parts of the gut can be affected and other symptoms include:

- Loss of appetite
- Nausea or vomiting
- Belching
- Tiredness and sometimes poor sleep
- Worsening of symptoms during your periods (menstruation)

What causes IBS?

The exact cause of IBS is unknown. There seem to be many reasons why people develop the condition. In some people irregular eating or particular dietary habits may be responsible or contributing to symptoms. Stress and anxiety can trigger symptoms and may make them worse or more frequent. IBS can develop after a stressful event, stomach bug, or gastroenteritis.

Who suffers from IBS?

IBS is one of the most common disorders of the digestive system. Up to 1 in 3 people experience symptoms at some time in their lives. Women are more likely to be affected than men and advice is most commonly sought by people aged between 20 and 40 years.

Is IBS serious?

IBS can be a very serious matter when it is affecting your quality of life. Although symptoms can be similar to those seen in other conditions there is nothing to suggest your symptoms will develop into anything more sinister. You will have received this self-help guide following referral by your doctor or hospital consultant. Diagnosis is usually based on detailed medical and symptom history after tests have been performed and ruled out other diseases of the bowel. You should, however, seek advice from your doctor if you experience: any sudden and unusual change in bowel habit; unintentionally lose weight of more than 2kg per week; pass blood from the back passage or notice blood in your stool.

Symptoms of IBS may be relieved by:

1. Lifestyle changes
2. Dietary changes
3. Medications

Helpful hints:

Keep a diary of what you eat, how you feel, and your symptoms. This is particularly important when you are making changes and can help you identify what triggers symptoms and what helps.

Only make one change at a time and make sure you give your bowels time to adjust to any changes you make.

Step 1: Lifestyle changes

Lifestyles today are often hectic and stressful. Stress can be a major contributing factor to IBS. It can trigger an attack or make symptoms worse. If you have a hectic lifestyle you may be missing or hurrying meals or relying heavily on convenience foods and snacks or takeaways.

Relaxation, regular exercise, and a healthy balanced diet can help improve symptoms whether you are stressed or not.

The following changes may help:

- Eat meals at regular times aiming to have 3 meals each day and snacks if you need to
- Try not to skip or hurry mealtimes
- Sit down at mealtimes and chew food well
- Avoid having large meals late in the evening
- Try using fresh ingredients instead of relying on convenience foods e.g. by cooking meals from scratch rather than using ready-made
- Drink plenty of fluids aiming for at least 8 cups per day and choosing water, no added sugar squash, caffeine free or herbal teas
- Reduce intake of caffeine containing drinks to no more than 3 per day, including tea, coffee, cola, and caffeine containing energy drinks
- Moderate intake of alcohol to no more than 2 units per day

1 pint beer/ lager/ ale (4-6 % alcohol)	3 units
175 ml glass of wine (12-13 % alcohol)	2 units
25 ml measure of spirit (40 % alcohol)	1 unit

- Avoid eating large amounts of food or drink containing the sweetener Sorbitol e.g. in chewing gum and sugar free mints
- Take regular gentle exercise aiming for a minimum of 5 x 30 minute sessions each week e.g. walking, cycling or swimming
- Make time to relax e.g. through walking, swimming, massage, aromatherapy, yoga or other leisure activities
- Ensure your belt or waistband is not too tight around your stomach
- Be realistic about what you can achieve, make one change at a time, and keep a record of how you are feeling

Step 2: Dietary changes

In addition to the changes you have already made, you may find these symptom-specific changes helpful. Make any changes for at least 4 weeks and monitor your symptoms to see if they improve.

Dietary changes for symptoms including wind, bloating and diarrhoea

- Reduce intake of foods that are high in fibre
- Limit fruit intake to 3 portions per day and fruit juice to 1 small glass
- Reduce intake of fatty foods
- Limit intake of processed foods, reheated foods, ready meals and manufactured foods including biscuits and cakes as they contain some starches that can be difficult to digest
- Remove skin, pips and pith from fruits and vegetables
- Drink plenty to replace any fluids you have lost if you have diarrhoea
- Including oats and golden linseeds can also help with symptoms of wind and bloating (see page 12)

One portion of fruit and vegetables is equivalent to:

- 1 orange, apple, banana or similar fruit
- 2 plums, kiwis or tangerines
- 1 slice of melon
- a handful of berries

- 3 heaped tablespoons of fruit salad, tinned or stewed fruit
- a heaped tablespoon of dried fruit
- 1 cereal bowl of salad
- 3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables

Dietary changes for constipation

- Increasing dietary fibre can help constipation however sudden changes in fibre intake can stimulate bowel function and could worsen pain and bloating. Gradually increase fibre intake and keep a record of symptoms in your diary
- Try including wholegrain foods in your diet
- Increase intake of fruit and vegetables
- Make sure you are drinking plenty of fluids aiming for 8-10 cups per day
- Including oats and golden linseeds can be helpful as they are a source of soluble fibre (see page 12)

Fibre

Either reduce or increase your fibre intake depending on your symptoms. Make changes gradually and monitor symptoms in your diary.

High Fibre Foods	Lower Fibre Alternatives
Wholegrain, brown and seeded, granary, brown and wholemeal bread or pitta, wholemeal chappatti	White bread, buns, wraps, bagels, pitta and chapatti
Brown or wholemeal rice and pasta	White rice, refined pasta and noodles
Biscuits or crackers with wholegrain, seeds, nuts or dried fruit	Cream crackers, water biscuits, and plain biscuits e.g. Rich Tea or Arrowroot
Wholegrain breakfast cereals e.g. All Bran, Weetabix, Shredded Wheat and muesli	Rice and corn based breakfast cereals e.g. Rice Krispies and cornflakes or Sugar Puffs
Pulses e.g. baked beans, kidney beans, chick peas and sprouting beans	Quorn and eggs, avoid all pulses
Nuts and seeds	Avoid all nuts and seeds
Fruit jams and marmalades with peel	Seedless jam, marmalade or fruit puree
Green bananas	Ripe bananas
Dried fruits	Avoid all dried fruits

High Fibre Foods	Lower Fibre Alternatives
Soups with vegetables pieces, pulses, or pasta	Strained soups and broths
Raw fruits with pips, skin and seeds	Tinned or stewed fruits (no skins), fruit with skin, peel and pips removed
Unpeeled potatoes including jacket potato	Mashed or boiled potatoes (without skins)
Vegetables from the cruciferous family such as broccoli, cauliflower, garlic, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, Swiss chard and other stringy or leafy greens, sweetcorn, onions and vegetables with skins or shells	Beetroot, courgette, pepper, asparagus, spinach, carrots, swede, squash and pumpkin, turnip, cauliflower florets, sweet potato, cassava, yam (remove all skin, peel, pips and stalks)
Raw vegetables and salad	Cook vegetables until soft
Any sauces or juices with skins or bits	Passata sauce, sieved tomatoes or tomato puree and vegetable juices

Fats

Some people find fatty foods difficult to digest, particularly where symptoms are of diarrhoea, wind and bloating. The following suggestions may help you to reduce your fat intake:

- Try using low-fat spread and use sparingly
- Eat fewer fatty meat products such as sausages, pies, pasties and faggots
- Reduce intake of biscuits, cakes, pastries and chocolate
- Cut down on savoury snacks including nuts, crisps, pastries and cheese biscuits
- Swap to reduced fat dairy products such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, low fat yoghurt, fromage frais or crème fraiche
- Use smaller portions of reduced fat cheeses, cottage cheese, edam or camembert
- Try using reduced fat salad cream, mayonnaise, dressings and sauces
- Grill, bake, steam, poach, microwave or dry roast without adding fat instead of frying

Golden Linseeds

Up to 1 tablespoon of golden linseeds can be added to foods such as cereals, yoghurts, desserts, soups and stew. These can be brought from health food shops and supermarkets.

Will live yoghurts or drinks help?

Live yoghurts and fermented milk drinks like Yakult, Actimel, Activia, or equivalent probiotic yoghurt or drinks contain bacteria cultures. They are thought to aid the digestive process and may help symptoms of wind and bloating. The amounts of types of bacteria vary and their benefits are not guaranteed. The different products often contain different mixtures of bacteria so try a different brand if the first has not helped. If you decide to trial these products take daily for at least 4 weeks and monitor symptoms in your diary to identify any benefit.

Do I have a food allergy or intolerance?

Food allergies are rare and unlikely to cause IBS symptoms. Using your food and symptom diary can be helpful to identify any specific foods that may be triggering your symptoms. It can also help identify any problem areas in your diet for example whether you are eating regularly or drinking enough fluid. If your symptoms have not resolved by following the advice in this self-help guide we recommend you contact your hospital consultant or doctor and request referral to a dietitian. Further adjustments or exclusions may be helpful but this should only be carried out under the guidance of a suitable specialist.

Step 3: Medications

Certain medications that are available to buy or prescribed drugs may help ease your symptoms. Make sure you consult with your pharmacist or doctor if you are going to try anything and always follow manufacturer's guidelines.

- Anti-diarrhoea agents e.g. Imodium, Arret or other Loperamide containing medication
- Bulking agents can be helpful if you suffer from constipation e.g. Fybogel, Isogel, Regularan or Normacol
- Antispasmodics may help be helpful if you are suffering from pain and spasms e.g. Colpermin, Mintec capsules, Colofac IBS or Buscopan IBS relief

If you would like further advice from a Registered Dietitian please ask your doctor or hospital consultant to refer you

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