Diet & Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
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Diet & Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

IBS is a change in how food and digestive juices move through the bowels. This movement can be too fast, causing diarrhea, or too slow, causing constipation, or a mixture of both causing alternating constipation and diarrhea. There may be other changes in bowel texture.

The above change in bowel habits and texture can also be mixed with some of the following symptoms:

• Abdominal pain and cramping
• Abdominal bloating
• Mucus in the stool
• A lot of gas
• Noise and sound
• Pain usually relieved by a bowel movement
• Incomplete evacuation (feeling like you still need to go to the bathroom even after a bowel movement)

IBS is different for everyone. Some people may have all of the symptoms listed above, while others may only have a few.
The good news

1. Having IBS does NOT increase your risk for developing major illness.

2. Life expectancy is similar to that of the general population.

3. Symptoms can be managed and reduced.

Treatment

There is no cure for IBS, but you can manage your symptoms. There is no one best way to treat IBS. Treatment plans are highly individualized, and not all interventions will work the same for all people with IBS.

Making improvements to your diet and lifestyle, such as paying more attention to your diet, increasing your physical activity, getting enough sleep, and stopping smoking can help with the management of your IBS symptoms.
Your diet

1. **Eat meals at regular times** (every 4-6 hours – starting with breakfast).

2. **Look at your current eating habits** (these will be explained in detail in this booklet) and try to:
   - Increase fibre intake
   - Decrease caffeine intake
   - Drink more fluids
   - Avoid or reduce foods that cause gas
   - Avoid spicy foods
   - Avoid or reduce foods that may increase heartburn (if heartburn is a problem for you)
   - Possibly limit milk intake (if lactose intolerant)
   - Avoid sweeteners – fructose, sorbitol, mannitol

3. **Drink less alcohol** – it is a gastrointestinal (GI) stimulant and causes movement to speed up through your bowel and may cause diarrhea, loose bowels, and cramping.

4. **Think about how you eat.**
   - Chew slowly – the mouth is the first point of digestion.
   - Eat smaller amounts, and eat with your mouth closed (to keep air from entering, which may cause gas).
   - Don’t use straws, and sip your drinks slowly.
   - Don’t eat large amounts before going to bed.
   - Decrease carbonated (fizzy) beverages.
   - Don’t chew gum or suck on hard candies.
Fibre
Fibre is a carbohydrate that is found naturally in plant foods, and it passes through the body undigested.

Fibre has many health benefits. It:
• Can make you feel full longer
• May help prevent diseases of the bowel
• May reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease
• Helps to lower bad cholesterol (LDL)
• Helps to control blood sugars
• Helps food move through the bowel and decreases bowel spasms. This is how fibre can help with IBS.

Fibre is found in complex carbohydrates:
• Vegetables and fruit
• Legumes
• Whole wheat and whole grain products
If you are intolerant to wheat, try other whole grains that are not from wheat such as:
› Brown rice
› Quinoa
› Brown rice pasta
› Breads, flours, or grains from quinoa, millet, buckwheat, oats, rice, amaranth, arrowroot, corn, or other gluten-free flours
› **Corn flour** is OK, but **whole corn kernels may not be (may cause gas)**
There are two types of fibre:

1. **Soluble** – dissolves or swells (becomes gel-like) when placed in water
   - Can help with diarrhea (thickens stool) or constipation (softens stool)
   - Helps with blood sugar control
   - Helps decrease LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol)
   - Sources:
     - Dried beans
     - Whole oats
     - Oat bran
     - Rice bran
     - Chick peas
     - Lentils
     - Psyllium
     - Ground flax seeds
     - Some fruits and vegetables such as apples, strawberries, sweet potatoes, and carrots

2. **Insoluble** – does not dissolve in water
   - Helps keep things flowing through the digestive system (can help with constipation)
   - Adds bulk to stool
   - Sources:
     - Wheat bran
     - Whole grain products
     - Corn bran
     - Some fruit and vegetables (especially the skins, leaves and seeds)
## Fibre recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total Fibre (g/day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-70</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 70</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How to increase fibre:

- Look for products that contain “whole grains”.
- Look for whole wheat or whole grain flour in grain products.
- Look for 2 g fibre or more per slice of bread or serving of grains.
- Add high fibre cereals to other foods including cookies, muffins, loaves, coatings for chicken or fish, or as a topping for yogurt.
- Add fruit to yogurt, puddings, cottage cheese, frozen yogurt.
- Add dried fruit (if tolerated) to baked goods, cereal, yogurt.
- Choose fruit for snacks.
- Add more vegetables to casseroles, soups.

**Note**: Increase fibre gradually, and increase fluids! Fibre does not work without adequate fluid intake. You need 8-10 cups of fluids per day. At least half from water is recommended.
Limit caffeinated drinks. (Caffeine is discussed in detail later in this booklet.) You can count up to 2-3 cups of caffeinated fluids (if tolerated), milk, decaffeinated coffee or tea, herbal tea, juice, Postum®, Ovaltine, or other caffeine-free fluids for your fluid sources.

It is best to get your fibre from food. When you do, it usually means you are eating a healthier diet that can decrease your risk for other diseases such as cancer and heart disease.

The following are 4 examples for gradually increasing a concentrated source of fibre to decrease specific IBS symptoms. **Do not do all examples at once.**

Note: It may take 2-4 weeks to see results. Be patient and remember to drink enough fluid.

**Try one example, based on your symptoms.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example 1: For constipation and/or diarrhea, bloating, and abdominal pain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All-Bran Buds® with psyllium fibre – has both soluble and insoluble fibre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Start with 2 Tbsp per day for 1-2 weeks (4 g fibre).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increase to ¼ cup per day for 1-2 weeks (8 g fibre).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If you are still having symptoms, increase to 1/3 cup per day (11 g fibre). <strong>Don’t take more than this amount.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example 2: For constipation, bloating, and abdominal pain
Natural bran

1. Start with 2 Tbsp per day of natural bran for 1-2 weeks (3 g fibre).
2. Increase to 4 Tbsp per day for 1-2 weeks (6.5 g fibre).
3. Then increase to 6 Tbsp per day (10 g fibre), if needed.

Example 3: For constipation, bloating, and abdominal pain
All Bran® cereal

1. Start with 2 Tbsp per day for 1-2 weeks (3 g fibre).
2. Increase to ¼ cup per day for 1-2 weeks (6 g fibre).
3. Then increase to ½ cup per day (12 g fibre).

Example 4: For diarrhea and constipation, or diarrhea with or without abdominal pain:
Psyllium seed husk

1. Start with 2 tsp per day for 1-2 weeks (4 g fibre).
2. Increase to 4 tsp per day for 1-2 weeks (8 g fibre).
3. Increase to 5-6 tsp (about 2 Tbsp) per day if you do not get better or worse with the above amounts (10-12 g fibre).
If you cannot get your fibre from food, there are fibre supplements you can take: Note: Try only one of these options at a time. If one does not help, discontinue and try a different one.

**Examples:**

- Metamucil®: has psyllium.
- Normacol®: made from a vegetable gum called sterculia; may work in IBS for constipation.
- Prodiem®: made from a vegetable gum.
- Citrucel®: methylcellulose. Soluble and gel forming.

**Follow package directions.**

**Guidelines for taking Metamucil®:**

- **Sugar-free:**
  - Start with 1 tsp per day for a week.
  - Then add another tsp another time of the day for another week.
  - You may need to take another tsp per day for a total of 3 tsp per day.

Do not take more than 4 tsp per day.

- **With sugar:**
  - Take as above except in Tbsp instead of tsp (3 tsp=1 Tbsp).

**Before adding psyllium seed husk to foods, or in Metamucil® as above, check with a pharmacist to see if it will interfere with your medications.**
Cut back on caffeine

Caffeine may cause heart palpitations, anxiety, insomnia, heartburn, diarrhea, stomach pain, and gas. Health Canada recommends limiting caffeine intake to no more than 400 mg/day. This is the same as 3 cups (8 oz. each) of coffee per day. People with IBS may not be able to tolerate this amount. If you find you are unable to tolerate caffeine, try drinking herbal tea, Postum®, Ovaltine, decaffeinated tea or coffee.

Amount of caffeine in some common drinks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Caffeine content (mg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 cup (237 mL) brewed coffee</td>
<td>135 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup roasted, ground, filter drip coffee</td>
<td>179 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup average blend tea</td>
<td>43 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup green tea</td>
<td>30 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 can (355 mL) cola</td>
<td>36-50 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy drinks</td>
<td>Can range from 50-350 mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since energy drinks can be high in caffeine, and contain other ingredients that may be harmful, it is best to avoid them.
Is fat a trigger for your symptoms?
Fat is hard to digest, so limiting the amount of fat you eat may help to reduce some of your IBS symptoms such as cramping, pain, and loose or liquid bowel movements.

Tips:
• Read food labels. Try to choose foods lower in fat. Look at the % DV (daily value) on nutrition labels. If there is 15% or more, it is a lot of fat. A DV of 5% or less is a little amount of fat for the serving size indicated.
• Limit fat to small amounts at a time. Go by portions and serving sizes found in Canada’s Food Guide.
• Choose lean cuts of meat and cut off visible fat before cooking.
• Choose low fat milk products: skim or 1% M.F. (milk fat).
• Use heart healthy cooking methods: grill, BBQ, broil, boil, or microwave.
• Watch for hidden fat: read labels on muffins, baked goods, and crackers.
• Skim fat off the top of homemade soups and stews.
• Avoid: deep fried foods, processed meats, rich desserts, gravies, high fat cream-based sauces, high fat snack foods (nachos, potato chips), chocolate, and fast foods.
Do you have gas?
Gas-causing foods can increase symptoms of bloating and gas.*Avoid/limit all raw vegetables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best choices:</th>
<th>Foods to avoid:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vegetables</strong></td>
<td>(including cooked vegetables)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Asparagus</td>
<td>• Broccoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Beets</td>
<td>• Brussels sprouts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Carrots</td>
<td>• Cabbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Green beans</td>
<td>• Cauliflower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mushrooms</td>
<td>• Corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Peas</td>
<td>• Cucumber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potato</td>
<td>• Kohlrabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pumpkin</td>
<td>• Leeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spinach</td>
<td>• Onions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Squash</td>
<td>• Peppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sweet potato</td>
<td>• Pimentos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Yellow beans</td>
<td>• Radishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Zucchini</td>
<td>• Rutabagas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sauerkraut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scallions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shallots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shallots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Turnip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best choices:</td>
<td>Foods to avoid:</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fruit</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apple (peeled)</td>
<td>• Apple (unpeeled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Applesauce (unsweetened)</td>
<td>• Avocado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Banana (soft, ripe)</td>
<td>• Cantaloupe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Berries</td>
<td>• Honeydew melon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Canned fruit</td>
<td>• Watermelon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grapefruit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kiwi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nectarine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Orange</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Peach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Beans (navy, lima, kidney, soybeans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Boiled eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Carbonated (fizzy) beverages like pop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coconut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lentils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Nuts and seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Popcorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prune juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Split peas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you have heartburn (reflux)?
Heartburn is more common in people with IBS.

Avoid proven irritants:
• Citrus fruits (orange, grapefruit, lemon, lime)
• Tomato (in any form: sauce, juice, whole, etc.)
• Caffeine
• Chocolate
• Peppermint
• Alcohol

Avoid potential irritants:
• Fatty foods
• High fat snack foods
• Spicy foods
• Gas-causing foods

Spicy foods
Spicy foods may make symptoms of pain, cramping, and diarrhea worse.

Limit or avoid: hot chili peppers, chili powder, garlic, hot sauce, curry, ginger, and spicy BBQ sauce.
Do you have lactose intolerance?

Lactose intolerance is common in people with IBS. Lactose is the natural sugar found in milk. People who are intolerant to lactose may not have enough of the enzyme (lactase) needed to break down the milk sugar.

The following symptoms may occur 15 minutes to 2 hours after eating a dairy food:

• Bloating
• Gas
• Cramping
• Diarrhea

Cheese and yogurt can usually be tolerated since the lactose is already digested with processing or the bacterial cultures in the yogurt.

Tips:

1. Avoid eating milk-containing products on an empty stomach.

2. Small amounts may be OK with other foods.

3. Consider using lactase enzyme pills or drops (can be found over-the-counter in a drugstore).

4. Use low-lactose or lactose-free milk, enriched or fortified soy, almond, or rice milk. Look for 25-30% DV for calcium on nutrition labels.

5. Consider calcium and vitamin D supplements if you’re not able to eat or drink many dairy products or dairy replacements. Talk to a dietitian about this.
Sweeteners

Avoid or limit sweeteners, as they may cause diarrhea, gas, and bloating.

These include fructose, sorbitol, mannitol, high-fructose corn syrup (seen as ‘glucose-fructose’ on labels).

These sweeteners can be found in pop, diet candies, some diet pop, some fruit juices, medications (including over-the-counter ones).

Tips:

• Read labels
• Dilute (water down) fruit juice
• Do not have sweeteners on an empty stomach
• Check medications
• Avoid low fat products that may be high in sugar or sweeteners
Other things that may help

FODMAPs
You may hear about a low FODMAP diet for IBS.

FODMAPs are fermentable carbohydrates or sugars that can cause symptoms of IBS such as abdominal discomfort, distension, bloating, nausea, fullness, and loose stools or even some diarrhea.

Fructose, sorbitol, mannitol, and high-fructose corn syrup (glucose-fructose), and lactose are considered FODMAPs. There are more, but you could try reducing these first to see if it makes a difference to your symptoms since they are the most common.

We recommend trying the other tips mentioned in this booklet first (such as increasing fibre and fluid, meals at regular times, reducing caffeine, fatty, spicy, and gassy foods) before reducing other FODMAPs.

If you are consistently following the guidelines in this booklet and still experiencing bothersome symptoms, follow-up with the dietitian to learn more about other FODMAPs.

Peppermint
Peppermint tea:

• May relax muscles in the bowel (avoid if you have heartburn).

Peppermint oil supplements:

• May help with pain, bloating, gas and diarrhea (avoid if you have heartburn).
Check with a pharmacist first to make sure it won’t interfere with your medications.

Peppermint tips:

› Dose: approximately 0.2 mL or 180-225 mg peppermint oil per capsule
› Take enteric-coated capsules
› Take 1-2 capsules 3 times per day
› Take 15-30 minutes before meals
› Look for a NPN, DIN, or USP number on the package to be sure it comes from a reputable source (check with a pharmacist if unsure)

Probiotics

Probiotics are healthy bacteria that may help with symptoms of IBS. They can be found in some brands of yogurt and also in capsule form.

Bifidobacteria has been shown to have a positive effect in reducing IBS symptoms in some people. Align™ is a probiotic supplement that some people find helpful, but it may not help in all people with IBS. Take a close look at the probiotic bacteria in your yogurt. Look for live bacterial cultures on the label.

Stress and sleep issues are very common in those with IBS. Try to seek support for these issues. Talk to a health professional about getting help.
Summary

For everyone:

1. Eat meals at regular times.
   › Try spacing meals 4-6 hours apart

2. Eat enough fibre.
   › Females: 21-25 g/day
   › Males: 30-38 g/day

3. 8-10 cups of fluids per day.
   › Try to limit caffeinated beverages to no more than 3 cups/day

4. Reduce caffeine and alcohol in your diet.

5. Manage your stress.

6. Try to **be consistent** with the above recommendations (especially with fibre and fluid).

In addition, depending on your symptoms:

› Gas and bloating: decrease gassy foods.
› Cramping, pain, and loose stool: decrease fatty foods.
› Diarrhea: focus on soluble fibre such as psyllium, oatmeal, and/or oat bran.
› Constipation: focus on insoluble fibre such as wheat bran, or either type of fibre can work (soluble or insoluble).
**Final note**

If you do not know what foods increase your symptoms, keep a food symptom diary for 7 days to look for trends. If you suspect a particular food bothers you, avoid it for a week to see if your symptoms improve. If not, add it back into your diet.

Since symptoms are highly individual, it is a good idea to follow-up with a dietitian to help guide you through the process.

If you have any questions, please ask.
We are here to help you.

**Notes:**

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