



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

A self-help guide for management of IBS

Issued by Nutrition & Dietetics Department

What is IBS?

Irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, is the term used to describe a common condition characteristic of a variety of symptoms that differ from one individual to another. There is no test for IBS, but you might need some tests to rule out other possible causes of your symptoms.

The most common symptoms are:

- Diarrhoea or constipation or both (constipation meaning defecation that is unsatisfactory because of infrequent stools, difficulty in passing stools or incomplete evacuation)
- Lower abdominal pain
- Bloating
- Wind
- A feeling of urgently needing to go to the toilet
- Feeling that you still need to go to the toilet even when you have just been

Other symptoms may include:

- Loss of appetite
- Tiredness
- Nausea

Women may notice worsening of symptoms at the time of their period.

It is not normal to pass blood if you have IBS. If this does happen, it is important to consult your doctor.

What causes IBS?

The cause of IBS is unknown. In some cases it seems to be linked to a stressful life event, anxiety or depression. It may also develop after a tummy upset or a course of antibiotics, both of which can change the bacteria in the bowel.

In itself IBS is harmless but the symptoms are uncomfortable and can cause a lot of misery. Be assured that, although it is unpleasant, IBS does not result in further harm or disease. There is no evidence to suggest that IBS and cancer are linked.

The suggestions in this booklet are based on 3 steps:

Step 1 – Lifestyle

Step 2 – Symptom specific dietary adjustment

Step 3 – Consult a dietitian for further advice – it may be appropriate to try an exclusion diet at this point.

First line advice: stage 1

Look at your lifestyle first and try the following:

- Have regular meals and take time to eat, making sure you chew your food well (smaller meal sizes may ease symptoms).
- Avoid missing meals or leaving long gaps between eating.
- Drink at least 8 cups of fluid per day, especially water or other non caffeinated drinks, for example herbal teas.
- Restrict tea and coffee to 3 cups (2 mugs) per day.
- Reduce intake of alcohol and fizzy drinks.
- Reduce intake of 'resistant starch' (starch that resists digestion in the small intestine and reaches the colon intact), which is often found in processed or re cooked foods i.e. takeaways, ready meals, frozen foods. Also be careful reheating leftovers.

- Cut down on rich or fatty foods including chips, fast foods, pies, batter, cheese, pizza, creamy sauces, snacks such as crisps, chocolate, cake and biscuits, spreads and cooking oils, and fatty meats such as burgers and sausages.
- Try taking probiotics for 4 weeks before deciding if they are helping.
- Take part in regular exercise e.g. walking, cycling, swimming.
- Take time to relax to reduce stress and anxiety e.g. relaxation music, yoga, aromatherapy or massage may help.

Probiotics

These are live bacteria and yeasts that are good for your digestive system. Probiotics are often called "good" bacteria because they help keep your gut healthy. They come in different forms e.g. capsules, live yoghurt, fermented drinks. There are many different forms of bacteria each unique to the individual gut therefore what works for one person may not work for another. It is therefore recommended you try a probiotic for 4 weeks before deciding if it has a positive effect.

First line advice: stage 2

Symptom specific advice.

If the measures in stage one do not help after several weeks then more dietary changes may be necessary. Different dietary changes help different symptoms. Use this table as a guide alongside the list that follows on page 5.

Symptom	Reduce your intake of	Have a regular intake of
Diarrhoea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High fibre foods (see list) • Caffeine • Alcohol • Fizzy drinks • Avoid sorbitol, found in sugar free sweets & drinks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probiotics • Low fibre foods (see list)
Diarrhoea alternating with constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above
Diarrhoea with wind & bloating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above • Limit fruit to 3 pieces/day and fruit juice to 1 small glass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above
Constipation with wind & bloating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High fibre food (see list) • Alcohol • Fizzy drinks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low fibre foods (see list) • Oats and golden linseeds. • Probiotics • Increase fluid intake to at least 8 glasses fluid/day e.g. water, sugar free squash, herbal teas.
Constipation without any wind & bloating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low fibre foods (see list) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradually reintroduce high fibre foods • Increase fluid intake to at least 8 glasses fluid/day e.g. water, sugar free squash, herbal teas.

Just wind & bloating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High fibre food (see list) • Avoid bran • Beans, pulses, brussels sprouts, cauliflower • Alcohol • Fizzy drinks • Limit fruit to 3 pieces/day and fruit juice to 1 small glass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oats and golden linseeds. • Low fibre foods (see list) • Probiotics
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Golden Linseeds

These can be added to foods such as breakfast cereal, yoghurts, salads or soups (ground if preferred). Start with a teaspoon a day and increase slowly up to 1 tablespoon a day if necessary. Give your bowels a few days to adjust to the effect before increasing. It's really important to increase your fluid intake along with your fibre so remember to wash down the linseeds with a small glass/teacup (150ml) of fluid with each tablespoon of linseeds taken.

	Low fibre foods	High fibre foods
Starchy foods and grains	White bread/white rolls/white chapatti	Wholemeal/granary bread/added fibre white bread/wholemeal chapatti
	White rice, rice noodles	Brown rice
	White pasta and noodles	Wholegrain pasta
	Cream crackers, rice cakes	Wholewheat crackers, rye crispbreads, oatcakes
Breakfast cereals	Rice or corn based cereals e.g. Cornflakes, Rice Krispies, porridge (soluble fibre)	Wholewheat cereals e.g. muesli, Weetabix, Bran Flakes, Fruit 'n' Fibre

	Low fibre foods	High fibre foods
Vegetables	Potatoes without the skin, boiled/mashed/roast/sweet potato Peeled and well cooked until soft: carrot, celery, beetroot, broccoli, cauliflower, courgette, lettuce, marrow, cucumber, turnip, pepper, radish, spinach, squash, tomatoes (seeds & skin removed)	Beans and pulses e.g. chickpeas, split peas, lentils, baked beans, jacket potatoes with skin brussel sprouts, cabbage, green beans, okra, garlic, onions, leeks, mushrooms, peas, sweetcorn
Fruit	Peeled to remove skin, pith & pips: apple, pear, peach, nectarine, pineapple, apricots, plums, grapes, melon, ripe banana, cherries, avocado	Kiwi, mango, grapefruit, oranges, rhubarb, unripe bananas, raspberries, strawberries and other berries, dried fruit
Nuts and seeds	Smooth peanut butter	All nuts and seeds
Meat, fish and alternatives	All meat, poultry and fish, quorn, tofu, eggs	
Foods containing fat or sugar	Plain biscuits and cakes e.g. Rich Tea, morning coffee, puddings & pastries made with white flour, jelly, ice-cream, sorbet, milk puddings, honey, fine cut marmalade, jelly-jams – no bits, boiled sweets, plain chocolate and plain toffee without dried fruit or nuts	Wholemeal biscuits or those with dried fruit e.g. digestives, fig rolls, garibaldi or muesli bars, cakes made with wholemeal flour, flapjack, jams with seeds, thick cut marmalade, chocolate with fruit & nuts

Stage 3

If IBS symptoms persist while following general lifestyle and dietary advice then talk to your dietitian. The possibility of food intolerance can be tested by trying an exclusion diet (low fodmap diet). This should be done under the supervision of a dietitian who will make sure your diet remains well-balanced.

Your dietitian is:

Contact details

Department of Nutrition & Dietetics
Wansbeck General Hospital
Woodhorn Lane
Ashington
NE63 9JJ
Telephone: 01670 564 006

Department of Nutrition & Dietetics
North Tyneside General Hospital
Rake Lane
North Shields
NE29 8NH
Telephone: 0191 293 2707

You can find out more information at:

www.theibsnetwork.org

www.nhs.uk

www.bda.uk.com

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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