

**A self-help guide  
for people with**

**Irritable Bowel  
Syndrome  
(IBS)**

**(Step 1 & 2)**

## **What is IBS?**

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is the term used to describe a variety of symptoms. Symptoms vary from one individual to another and can be worse for some than others. It is a very common condition with around one in five people affected.

The most common symptoms are:

- diarrhoea or constipation or both
- low abdominal pain which may ease after going to the toilet
- feeling bloated
- feeling you still need to go to the toilet when you have just been
- passing mucus - even on its own
- a feeling of urgently needing to go to the toilet

Other symptoms may include:

- loss of appetite
- nausea or vomiting
- tiredness
- belching or excessive wind
- having to urinate urgently and feeling the need to urinate after you have just been
- pain during sexual intercourse
- worsening of symptoms during periods (menstruation)

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

**If you think you have IBS, discuss your symptoms with your Doctor before trying any of the treatments discussed in this leaflet.**

### **What causes IBS?**

It is not known exactly what causes IBS. In some cases, symptoms may start after having a tummy bug or a stressful life event.

### **Can IBS lead to Cancer?**

No - there is no evidence to suggest that IBS and cancer are related.

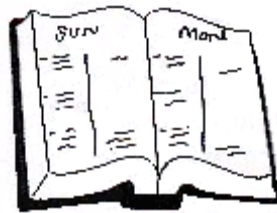
### **So what can I do to relieve my symptoms?**

The suggestions in this booklet are based on the following steps:

- Step 1** - Look at your lifestyle
- Step 2** - Adjust your diet according to your symptoms

If your symptoms have still not improved after 4-6 weeks:

- Step 3** - Consult a dietitian for further advice - ask your GP or hospital doctor to refer you.



You may find it helpful to keep a diary of your diet and symptoms as you make these changes. This will remind you of what has helped.

Read on for advice on steps 1 and 2 .....

## **Step 1 - Look at your lifestyle**

If you have a busy lifestyle, you may be relying on ready-meals, high fat snacks or take-aways. Whilst these are OK to have occasionally, you may not be getting all the nutrients you need and these foods could be making your IBS symptoms worse.

Try these simple lifestyle changes:

- Follow the guidelines on the next page to ensure your diet is well balanced.
- Eat three regular meals each day - don't be tempted to skip meals.
- Try making more meals using fresh ingredients (instead of ready-meals).
- Chew food well and take time to sit and eat.
- Drink plenty of fluid - at least 8 cups a day (but not all tea, coffee or fizzy drinks as these can worsen symptoms. Alcohol can also make symptoms worse). Water, sugar -free squash and herbal teas are good choices.
- Take regular exercise e.g. walking, cycling, swimming.
- Make the most of your leisure time and take time to relax. Stressful situations can make IBS symptoms worse. Try to find out what affects you. Relaxation tapes, yoga, aromatherapy or massage may help.

### **How do I make sure my diet is balanced?**

Choose a variety of foods from each of the five food groups shown on the next page.

### **Fruit and vegetables**

Aim for 5 portions of these each day. Have a variety of these foods.

### **Bread, cereals, rice, pasta, potatoes**

Have one of these foods at every meal time.



### **Meat, fish, egg, poultry, beans & pulses**

Aim for 2 -3 portions of these each day. Choose lean/low fat versions.

### **Foods containing fat, foods containing sugar**

e.g. biscuits, cakes, crisps, chocolates, sweets, margarine/butter, cooking oils. Keep these to a minimum.

### **Milk & dairy products**

Try to have 2 - 3 portions of these each day. Choose low fat versions e.g. skimmed/semi-skimmed milk, low/reduced fat cheeses or yoghurts.

If you still  
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## **Step 2 - Adjust your diet according to your symptoms**

**If there is no improvement after 4-6 weeks, ask your GP or hospital doctor to refer you to a Dietitian for further advice.**

### **1. Diarrhoea, or alternating constipation and diarrhoea, with or without wind and bloating**

If your main symptom is diarrhoea avoid the skin, pips and stalks of fruit and vegetables and choose white bread and rice or corn-based cereals instead of wholegrain

*Reduce your intake of*

- tea or coffee (not more than 3 cups per day)
- alcohol (not more than 2 units per day and no more than 5 out of 7 days a week) and fizzy drinks
- fruit (not more than 3 pieces per day) and fruit juice (not more than one small glass per day)
- sorbitol (found in sugar free sweets)
- foods high in fibre

biscuits, cakes, crisps, ready-meals, tinned/packet soups, 'cook-in' sauces

*Have a regular intake of*

- at least 8 glasses of fluid throughout the day e.g. water, sugar free squash, herbal teas
- foods low in fibre
- live yoghurt or fermented milk drinks

### **Constipation, with wind and bloating**

*Reduce your intake of*

- alcohol (not more than 2 units per day and no more than 5 out of 7 days a week) and fizzy drinks
- foods high in fibre (except oats and linseeds\*)  
biscuits, cakes, crisps, ready-meals, tinned/packet soups, 'cook-in' sauces

*Have a regular intake of*

- at least 8 glasses of fluid throughout the day e.g. water, sugar free squash, herbal teas
- foods low in fibre plus oats and linseeds\*  
live yoghurt or fermented milk drinks

### **2. Constipation, with or without wind and bloating**

*Reduce your intake of*

- foods low in fibre (except meat, fish and alternatives and milk and dairy products)

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*Have a regular intake of*

- at least 8 glasses of fluid throughout the day e.g. water, sugar free squash, herbal teas
- foods high in fibre

### **3. Wind and bloating only**

*Reduce your intake of*

- foods high in fibre (except oats and linseeds\*)
- alcohol (not more than 2 units per day and no more than 5 out of 7 days a week) and fizzy drinks
- fruit (not more than 3 pieces per day) and fruit juice (not more than one small glass per day)

biscuits, cakes, crisps, ready-meals, tinned/packet soups, 'cook-in' sauces

*Have a regular intake of*

- foods low in fibre plus oats and linseeds\*  
at least 8 glasses of fluid throughout the day e.g. water, sugar free squash, herbal teas live yoghurt or fermented milk drinks

## **Some questions answered...**

### **Can herbal drinks help?**

Some people find that herbal teas such as peppermint or camomile help. Some have also found Aloe Vera to be useful - although it may make diarrhoea worse.

### **Should I take live yoghurts or fermented milk drinks?**

Live/bio yoghurts e.g. Loseley, Onken, Nestlé LC1, Provamel Natural Yofu, Danone Activia and fermented milk drinks e.g. Yakult, Actimel or Nestlé LC1 contain added cultures (bacteria). These bacteria may help further digestion of food in the lower part of the gut. This may reduce symptoms of wind and bloating. However, the amount of live bacteria in different products will vary and cannot be guaranteed. You will need to take these every day for at least 2 weeks for them to work. It may also help to try another brand containing a different bacteria, if the first hasn't help.

### **Do I have a food allergy or intolerance?**

True food allergies are rare and unlikely to cause IBS symptoms but they could be caused by a food intolerance.



There are no known reliable tests for food intolerance. An exclusion or elimination diet is the only way to find out if your symptoms are made worse by certain foods. If the advice given in this leaflet has not helped and you feel your symptoms may be due to food intolerance, please ask your Doctor to refer you to a State Registered Dietitian.

### **What else could help?**

#### **Medication**

A number of different drugs are available which may help to relieve your symptoms. Your doctor will advise which medicines are suitable to try.

#### **Complementary medicine**

To find a reputable practitioner contact:

- Institute of Complementary Medicine, PO Box 194, London. SE16 1QZ. Tel: 020 7237 5165

*Hypnotherapy or psychotherapy counselling* have been found to be helpful to many people with IBS. To find a registered therapist near you, send a large SAE to:

- Holistic Resources, Cribden House, Rossendale General Hospital, Rossendale, Lancs. BB4 6NE

FOOD GROUP	FOODS LOW IN   IBRE
<b>BREAD, OTHER CEREALS AND POTATOES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• white bread, white chapatti</li> <li>• white pasta</li> <li>• white rice</li> <li>• rice or corn based cereals</li> <li>• cream crackers, rice cakes</li> <li>• boiled, mashed or roast potatoes (no skin)</li> <li>• yams, sweet potato</li> </ul>
<b>FRUIT AND VEGETABLES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fresh, tinned or stewed: apples, apricots, cherries, fruit cocktail, grapes, lychees, nectarine, melon, ripe banana, pears, peaches, pineapple, plums, avocado (<b>avoiding pips, skin and pith</b>)</li> <li>• carrots, celery, beetroot, broccoli or cauliflower florets, courgette, lettuce, marrow, skinned cucumber, skinned/pipped tomatoes, pepper, radish, spinach, squash, swede, turnip</li> </ul>
<b>MEAT, FISH AND ALTERNATIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all meat, poultry and fish</li> <li>• Quorn</li> <li>• smooth nut butters</li> <li>• eggs</li> </ul>
<b>MILK AND DAIRY PRODUCTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• milk</li> <li>• plain or fruit yoghurts</li> <li>• cheese</li> </ul>
<b>FOODS CONTAINING FAT, FOODS CONTAINING SUGAR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• butter, margarine, oil</li> <li>• plain biscuits e.g. Rich Tea, Morning Coffee</li> <li>• cakes, puddings and pastries made with white flour</li> <li>• cream, jelly, ice-cream, milk puddings, sorbet</li> <li>• honey, sugar, syrup, 'jelly' type jams and fine cut marmalade</li> <li>• boiled sweets, chocolate, plain toffee without dried fruit or nuts</li> </ul>

### FOODS HIGH IN FIBRE

- wholemeal/granary bread, added fibre white bread, wholemeal chapatti
  - wholegrain pasta
  - brown rice
  - wholegrain cereals, e.g. Bran Flakes, Weetabix, muesli, porridge, Ready Brek
  - rye crispbreads, wholemeal crackers, oatcakes
  - jacket potato skins
- berry fruits, unripe bananas, dried fruit, grapefruit, kiwi fruit, mango, rhubarb, oranges
  - brussel sprouts, cabbage, garlic, green beans, okra, onions, leeks, mushrooms, peas, sweetcorn
  - beans and pulses, chick peas, split peas
- all types of nuts and seeds
- yoghurts containing nuts or cereal
- wholemeal biscuits e.g. digestives
  - biscuits containing dried fruit or nuts e.g. Garibaldi, Fig rolls
  - cakes, puddings and pastries made with wholemeal flour and/or nuts, dried fruit
  - flapjack, cakes and puddings made with oats
  - jams with seeds or skin, thick cut/chunky marmalade, sweet mincemeat, pickles or chutneys
  - sweets and chocolate with fruit or nuts, muesli bars

**Other useful addresses are:**

- **IBS Network**, Northern General Hospital, Sheffield.  
S5 7AU. Tel: 0114 2611531. Helpline: 01543 492192.  
Website: [www.ibsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.ibsnetwork.org.uk).

*This is a charity which produces a quarterly journal ('Gut Reaction') providing articles and information on IBS.*

- **IBS Research**, Freepost LON10960, London, SW20 8BR. Freephone: 0800 783 7327

*This is a research unit which produces a journal ('IBS Bulletin') which contains articles on recent research studies.*

**If you would like further advice from a State Registered Dietitian, please ask your GP or hospital doctor to refer you.**