

Patient information

Dietary advice for patients with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

What is IBS?

IBS is a common condition that affects approximately 1 in every 5 people. It is characterised by a collection of symptoms including:

- Abdominal pain or discomfort which may ease after opening your bowels
- Abdominal bloating and increased wind (flatulence and/or belching)
- Passing mucus in your stools
- Abdominal gurgling
- Changes in bowel habit (diarrhoea and/or constipation)
- A feeling of urgency to open your bowels or feeling the need to open your bowels despite having just done so

Severity of symptoms varies from person to person, and some people may experience a lack of energy, nausea, backache or bladder symptoms also.

It is important that a diagnosis of IBS is confirmed before proceeding with dietary interventions to ensure other causes of symptoms have been excluded, including inflammatory bowel disease and coeliac disease.

If you have any of the following symptoms as well as any of the symptoms listed above, you should speak to your GP for referral to a specialist.

- Unintentional and unexplained weight loss
- Rectal bleeding
- A family history of bowel or ovarian cancer

- A change in bowel habits to looser and/or more frequent stools persisting for more than six weeks in a person aged over 60 years

How to manage symptoms of IBS?

Unfortunately there is no cure for IBS, but symptoms can often be managed with simple changes to your diet and lifestyle. It is important to remember that IBS is not caused by a food allergy. If you feel that you may be suffering with a food allergy, please refer to Allergy UK (www.allergyuk.org) or Anaphylaxis Campaign (www.anaphylaxis.org.uk) for further information.

Some people find that stress and anxiety can worsen symptoms of IBS, therefore if you are able to reduce your stress/anxiety levels, this can reduce severity and frequency of symptoms. For support with managing your stress and anxiety please visit <https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/suffolk/>.

If your symptoms persist after following the general lifestyle and dietary advice contained below, for the recommended length of time, then you should reintroduce the foods you have cut out of your diet and ask your doctor to refer you to your local Dietitian. Further dietary manipulation may be required, such as a single food avoidance or exclusion diet, for example the low FODMAP diet, and these types of diet should only be undertaken with the advice and support of a Dietitian to ensure appropriateness and dietary adequacy.

General dietary changes to consider

- Aim to eat 3 regular meals daily or smaller more frequent meals if this is tolerated better
- Try not to skip any meals or leave long gaps between eating
- Limit alcohol intake to no more than two units per day with at least two alcohol free days per week
- Limit caffeine-containing drinks to no more than two mugs per day, this includes tea, coffee, green tea, energy drinks
- Reduce intake of fizzy drinks
- Ensure adequate fluid intake daily, especially water or other non-caffeinated drinks e.g. herbal teas, aiming for 2 litres daily

- Reduce intake of rich or fatty foods such as chips, fast-foods, ready meals, pies, batter, cheese, pizza, creamy sauces, fatty meats such as burgers and sausages, crisps, chocolate, cake, biscuits, spreads and cooking oils
- Reduce intake of spicy foods
- Reduce intake of manufactured foods such as ready meals and cook meals from fresh ingredients wherever possible
- Limit fresh fruit intake to three portions per day. One portion = 80g
- Chew your meals well and ensure you take time to relax and enjoy your meal
- Reduce intake of 'resistant starches' as outlined below

Resistant starches

These are the starches in foods that are not completely digested by the body. They enter the bowel where they ferment and produce gas. Try reducing your intake of the following foods:

- pulses, whole grains, sweetcorn, green bananas and muesli that contains wheat bran
- undercooked or reheated potato or maize/corn – instead eat them freshly cooked and still hot
- oven chips, crisps, potato waffles, fried rice – choose freshly cooked potatoes or boiled rice
- part-baked and reheated breads, such as garlic bread, pizza base – choose fresh breads
- processed food such as potato or pasta salad, or manufactured biscuits and cakes
- ready meals containing pasta or potato, such as lasagne, shepherd's pie, macaroni cheese
- dried pasta – use fresh pasta instead

Lifestyle changes to consider

- Take time to relax – some people use relaxation tapes, yoga, aromatherapy, massage or meditation books/apps to help with this
- Regular exercise, for example walking, cycling and swimming
- Chew your food well and take time to eat your meals slowly and whilst sitting at a table

Things to remember

- Make one change at a time, trying each change for 3-4 weeks to see if symptoms are improving
- Keep a food and symptom diary to monitor any changes or improvement of symptoms
- Only make changes according to the symptoms you are experiencing

Specific symptom management

For symptoms of bloating and wind, consider making the following changes:

- Limit intake of gas producing foods such as beans and pulses, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, sugar-free mints and chewing gum
- Include oats (porridge or oat-based cereals) regularly in your diet
- Include linseeds (up to 1-2 tablespoons daily) regularly, ensuring they are always consumed with fluid (150ml fluid per tablespoon). Gradually increase your intake of linseeds, starting with $\frac{1}{4}$ tablespoon daily. Linseeds can be added to salads, soups, cereals, yogurt etc.

For symptoms of constipation:

- Gradually increase your fibre intake, ensuring no sudden increases as this may worsen symptoms. Good sources of fibre include wholegrains, oats, vegetables, fruit and linseeds. High fibre foods help to soften stools and make them easier to pass
- Aim for at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day, see portion size information below

- Include linseeds (up to 1-2 tablespoons daily) regularly, ensuring they are always consumed with fluid (150ml fluid per tablespoon). Gradually increase your intake of linseeds, starting with ¼ tablespoon daily. Linseeds can be added to salads, soups, cereals, yogurt etc.
- Avoid adding any extra wheat bran

For symptoms of diarrhoea:

- Ensure intake of at least 2 litres of fluid daily to replace lost fluids
- Limit caffeine intake to no more than 2 mugs (3 cups) daily, this includes tea, coffee and any soft drinks containing caffeine
- Reduce intake of high-fibre foods such as wholegrain breakfast cereals and breads, instead choosing white alternatives
- Avoid sugar-free sweets, mints, gum and drinks that contain sorbitol, mannitol and xylitol

What is a portion of fruit and vegetables?

Fresh fruit = 80 g

- 1 apple, banana, pear, orange or similar sized fruit
- ½ grapefruit, 1 slice of large fruit (melon, pineapple)
- 2 plums, apricots etc
- a handful of grapes, cherries, berries
- 3 heaped tablespoons fruit salad (fresh, tinned, stewed)

Dried fruit = 30 g

- 1 heaped tablespoon raisins, figs, apricots

Vegetables = 80 g

- 3 heaped tablespoons raw, cooked, frozen or tinned vegetables
- a dessert bowl of salad

Probiotics

Some people find that probiotics can help to improve symptoms of IBS, however there is currently little evidence to support this. If you do wish to try 'probiotic' supplements, yoghurts or fermented milk drinks, then you should take the manufacturer's recommended daily dose for a period of at least 4 weeks and up to 12 weeks. If they do not improve your symptoms after that period of time then you could try an alternative brand.

Useful websites

The IBS Network
0114 272 3253
www.theibsnetwork.org

IBS diet: video guide
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/ibs-diet-video-guide/>

IBS management: Webinar
www.patientwebinars.co.uk

Guts UK Charity
020 7486 0341
<https://gutscharity.org.uk/>

Mental Health, Wellbeing and Emotional Support
<https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/>

Pain Concern
www.painconcern.org.uk
Can help with pain management techniques and advice

OneLife
www.onelifesuffolk.co.uk
Can help with weight loss, smoking cessation, increasing activity levels and more

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the disabledgo website link below:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>