



Food Facts

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Introduction

Irritable Bowel Syndrome, or IBS, is a very common condition affecting up to one in five adults. The bowel's normal rhythmical waves go into spasm. The actual cause is still unclear although lifestyle and stress, diet or certain medical conditions can all play a part. Some symptoms may improve with drug treatment, relaxation techniques, or by making changes to the diet or lifestyle. Dietary advice for IBS sufferers would be different depending on the symptoms.

Should I Follow a Special Diet?

There is no "ideal" diet which will bring relief to all IBS sufferers. There may be some fairly simple changes you can try, which will help to relieve some of the symptoms:

Eating Regularly

People with erratic eating patterns may find their symptoms improve when they start to eat more regularly. Try to have regular small meals, avoid missing meals and avoid over-indulging (ie eating too much at a particular time of day). Some people find that rich, fatty or spicy meals make their symptoms worse. Reducing the fat content of your meals might help.

Drinking Plenty

Aim to drink at least eight to ten glasses a day: mineral water, dilute fruit juice, herb or fruit teas (try Camomile or Mint), with smaller quantities of ordinary tea or coffee (preferably decaffeinated).

Caffeine can stimulate the bowel, so if you drink a lot of coffee, tea or cola (more than say five cups/glasses a day), cut down on these, swap to decaffeinated types and try to include more water. Still drinks might be preferable to fizzy drinks.

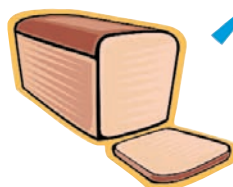
If you have followed steps one and two for two weeks, or felt that you were already following these guidelines, and symptoms have not improved, then consider the following:

Focus on your Fibre Intake

Altering the amount or type of fibre you eat may help, and dietary advice regarding fibre would depend on the symptoms being experienced.

There are two types of fibre:

- Soluble Fibre found in oats, beans, peas, lentils, fruit & vegetables.



- Insoluble Fibre found in wholemeal/granary bread, wheat and bran breakfast cereals, brown rice and pastas, whole wheat crackers and crisp breads.

More Fibre?

A diet including plenty of both sorts of fibre may be helpful if you suffer from constipation, particularly if you are not experiencing 'wind' or 'bloating'. Avoid adding unprocessed bran to your diet as this can irritate the bowel.

Less Fibre?

For some people, eating too much fibre, especially the insoluble type, can make symptoms worse, particularly 'wind' or 'bloating'. If you suffer from diarrhoea, reducing the fibre content of your diet may also help. You could try reducing those foods high in fibre for a trial two to four week period (see table one for examples of high and low fibre foods). Aim for two servings each of fruit and vegetables. If there is no improvement re-introduce your normal level of fibre.



If symptoms seem to settle on less fibre, you can then start to very gradually re-introduce some high fibre foods, noting if any symptoms return. This will help you to find your tolerance level, or identify particular foods which upset you. Everyone's tolerance for fibre is different, and it might take a bit of trial and error to get the balance right.

Food Intolerance

Some people with IBS may be intolerant to some foods. The sensitive gut may react to certain foods, and when these are taken out of the diet, symptoms can improve. It is very important not to cut whole food groups out of your diet as there is a real risk of vitamin or mineral deficiency. If you want to try to make major changes to your diet, or need support in making these changes, ask to be referred to a Registered Dietitian.

See Table One below - Examples of high and low fibre foods.



Table One: Examples of High and Low Fibre Foods

Foods High in Fibre	Foods Lower in Fibre
<p>Cereals: Wholemeal, wholegrain or granary breads, cereals, mueslis, porridge biscuits and crackers, oatcakes, pasta and rice.</p>	<p>Cereals: White bread, rice and pasta, noodles crackers, plain biscuits, sponges and scones, Cornflakes, Rice Krispies, porridge.</p>
<p>Fruit and Vegetables: Jacket potato skins, raw vegetables, course vegetables (eg. broccoli, sprouts, celery, cabbage, green beans, onions), pulse vegetables (eg. peas, sweet corn, beans) salad vegetables, fruit skins, seeds and pith, dried fruit (eg. prunes raisins, apricots).</p>	<p>Fruit and Vegetables: Mashed and new potatoes, tender root vegetables (eg. carrots, turnip, swede, beetroot) flesh of tomatoes, tinned tomatoes. Peeled stewed and tinned fruit, ripe bananas, fresh fruit juice.</p>
<p>Miscellaneous: Nuts and foods containing nuts.</p>	<p>Miscellaneous: Jelly, ice cream.</p>

Summary

There may be several causes of IBS, and the range of symptoms experienced will vary from person to person. There are a variety of approaches in the treatment of this common condition. Making changes to diet is one area to consider. Try to eat a regular, healthy diet and see if any of the changes outlined help to make your symptoms more manageable.

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