



NHS

*Ipswich and East Suffolk
Clinical Commissioning Group*

Information to help you manage Irritable Bowel Syndrome in adults



Aim

This information is to help you ease the symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) by making changes to your diet and lifestyle.

What is IBS?

IBS is a common condition describing a variety of digestive system symptoms. Symptoms tend to come and go and the severity varies from one person to another.

Prevalence (the proportion of people with IBS)

IBS is thought to affect around one in five people at some point in their life.

Symptoms

Typical symptoms of IBS are:

- Abdominal pain or discomfort which may be eased after opening your bowels
- A change in bowel habit such as diarrhoea and/or constipation
- Bloating and wind (flatulence and burping)
- Passing mucus from your bottom
- Feeling the need to open your bowels despite having just been to the toilet
- A feeling of urgency to open your bowels.

You may also have:

- Lethargy (lack of energy)
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Backache
- Bladder symptoms (waking up to urinate [wee] at night, having an urgency to urinate and difficulty fully emptying the bladder)

It is important that you consult your doctor if you are passing blood in your stools (poo) or losing weight without trying to.



Management

There is no cure for IBS, but symptoms can often be managed by making changes to your diet and lifestyle.

Lifestyle advice

- Exercise - People who exercise regularly have a lower risk of many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers. Many people find exercising helps relieve their IBS symptoms. Aim for a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week. The exercise should be hard enough to raise your heart and breathing rates, such as fast-walking or cycling.
- Stress - If you are able to reduce your stress levels this may reduce the frequency and severity of your symptoms of IBS. Try relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga or tai chi.

Dietary advice

- Eat regular meals and take time to eat
- Avoid missing meals or leaving long gaps between eating
- Drink at least 8 cups of fluid each day, especially water or other drinks without caffeine such as herbal tea
- Limit caffeine-containing drinks such as tea, coffee and 'energy' drinks to no more than three cups per day
- Reduce intake of alcohol and fizzy drinks
- Consider limiting intake of high-fibre foods (e.g. wholemeal or high fibre flour and breads, cereals high in bran, and whole grains such as brown rice)
- Reduce intake of 'resistant starch'. This is starch that resists digestion in the gut (small intestine) and reaches the large intestine intact. It is often found in processed foods e.g. crisps, biscuits and cakes, ready meals and cooked foods left to cool such as cold potato or pasta salad
- Limit fresh fruit to three portions (80g each) per day
- If you have diarrhoea avoid sorbitol (an artificial sweetener) found in sugar-free drinks, sweets, mints and chewing gum, and in some diabetic and slimming products
- If you have wind and bloating, try to increase your intake of oats, e.g. oat-based breakfast cereal or porridge. Also try to have 1 tablespoon of linseed per day.



Probiotics

Manufacturers of probiotics claim these 'good' bacteria found in some food products and supplements, can help improve digestive health. Some people find taking probiotics regularly helps relieve their IBS symptoms, however there is little evidence to support this. If you want to try a probiotic product, take the dose recommended by the manufacturer for at least four weeks whilst monitoring the effect.

Aloe vera

Use of aloe vera for IBS is not recommended.

Acupuncture and reflexology

There is no medical evidence to suggest either acupuncture or reflexology are effective treatments for IBS and therefore cannot be recommended.

If symptoms persist

If your symptoms persist after four weeks of following this general lifestyle and dietary advice, further dietary manipulation may be required such as single food avoidance or exclusion diet, for example the low FODMAP diet. These should only be undertaken with the advice and support of a Dietitian to ensure appropriateness and dietary balance. Talk to your GP about a referral.

References:

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2015) CG61 Irritable bowel syndrome in adults: Diagnosis and management of irritable bowel syndrome in primary care. Available to download from: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg61. Tel. 0300 3230140.

NHS Choices. Available to download from: www.nhs.uk/conditions/irritable-bowel-syndrome/Pages/Introduction.aspx

BDA foodfacts on IBS. Available to download from: <https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/IBSfoodfacts.pdf>

If you would like this information in another language or another format, including audio tape, braille or large print, please call 01473 770 014.

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku zadzwoń na podany poniżej numer.

Polish

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Portuguese

Jeigu jums reikia suprašti šia, informacija, kita kalba prašom skambinti šiuo numeru apačioje

Lithuanian

এই লেখাটি যদি অন্য ভাষায় বুঝতে চান তাহলে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন

Bengali

ئەگەر پێویستت بە یارمەتی ھەبە بۆ تێگەیشتنی ئەم زانیاریانە بە زمانیکی تر تکایە پەیوەندی بە ژمارەى خوارووە بکە

Kurdish

如果你需要其他語言來幫助你了解這些資訊，請撥以下電話。

Chinese

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