

Patient Information

Pelvic Floor Service

Irritable Bowel Syndrome - dietary advice for managing your symptoms

Introduction

This information leaflet may help with the long-term management of bowel symptoms including urgency and difficulty with control, bloating and excessive wind. It is intended for patients under the care of the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Pelvic Floor Service. If you have a medical condition requiring you to follow a specific diet please consult a health professional first. It may not cover everything you want to know so please ask if you need further information.

What is IBS?

This is an umbrella term that describes a disorder affecting bowel function rather than having an underlying cause. Symptoms may include:

- abdominal bloating and wind
- abdominal pain or spasms often relieved by going to the toilet
- rumbling or gurgling abdominal noises
- diarrhoea, constipation or an erratic bowel habit
- urgency to go to the toilet or incontinence
- rectal pain
- sensation of incomplete emptying after going to the toilet

Bloating

Fibre is the part of plant food that is not completely broken down as it passes through the gut. It is found in cereal, fruit and vegetables and is important in keeping stools moving through the bowel and regulating bowel function. Bacteria in the colon try to break down the fibre by fermentation so more gasses are produced when there is more fibre present.

Chronic diarrhoea

Fibre is considered to be an important factor in maintaining a healthy bowel and regulating bowel function in the general population. However you may have found that fibre causes your stools to be frequent and loose along with bloating and excessive wind. Reducing your fibre intake therefore can help to reduce your bowel frequency and abdominal symptoms.

We recommend a low-fibre diet only after we have excluded other causes for your symptoms. Foods that are naturally low in fibre are easily digested and leave a minimal amount of residue in the colon reducing stool frequency and reducing bloating and wind. A list of low and high fibre foods is provided in this leaflet.

Useful tips

This information is only a general guide and a certain amount of trial and error is necessary to identify any foods that may upset your bowels.

- A food diary may be useful in identifying foods that aggravate your symptoms. Remember to record how you are eg rushed, stressed as well as what you eat
- Introduce new foods one at a time
- Try soluble fibre foods such as oat bran as these may be better tolerated
- Avoid more than 2 portions of fruit and 2 portions of vegetables per day. Lower fibre options include courgettes, carrots, mushrooms, asparagus, cucumber, tomato and lettuce
- Avoid rich or very spicy sauces if they worsen your symptoms
- Avoid excessive caffeine or alcohol as these have a laxative effect
- Be aware that fried or fatty foods may trigger your symptoms
- The green parts of chives, leeks or spring onions provide flavour if you don't tolerate onions

Mood

Try not to get stressed about your bowels as this can make matters worse. Try to include a good variety of foods in your diet and chew your food well. Eat smaller meals at regular intervals to help your food to be digested.

Additional Information

- Ready meals and pre-prepared foods such as pizza and pies should be eaten with caution as they often contain sugars and preservatives known to aggravate bowel symptoms.

- Avoid foods containing Sorbitol, a sugar replacement found in sugar-free chewing gum, sugar-free mints and many diet and diabetic products.
- Research into dietary sugars suggests that some people have difficulty absorbing foods containing high levels of fructose leading to bloating, wind, abdominal pain and constipation/diarrhoea.
- FODMAPS are a collection of short-chain carbohydrates and sugar alcohols found in foods and food additives. A diet low in FODMAPS can significantly reduce IBS-related bowel symptoms. You can find out more by speaking to your health professional.
- Some people are unable to break down a sugar called lactose which is found in milk products. Lactose intolerance is often diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40 and is more common in Asian and Afro-Caribbean people. Omit milk products for 2 weeks to see if this reduces your symptoms.

Constipation

It is important that you drink enough fluids while following a low fibre diet to avoid becoming constipated. You should aim to have at least 8 to 10 cups of fluid daily. If you experience constipation while following a low fibre diet, you may need to take a fibre supplement such as Normacol, Celevac or Linseeds as they avoid causing wind and bloating and should be taken with plenty of fluid. Your doctor, specialist nurse or dietician can advise you about these.

Low fibre foods and fluids

The following table provides examples of low fibre foods and fluids to include in your diet and those that are high in fibre to be avoided.

Please remember to use the table as a general guide. Bowel symptoms are individual so different foods may affect different people.

Aim for a varied and balanced diet as you are able but if you have any questions or concerns please ask. We may refer you to a dietician if necessary.

Food type	Low fibre foods to include	High fibre foods to avoid
Bread, cereals and nuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White bread, English muffins, plain scones and bagels, pancakes, plain naan bread chapatti, poppadoms or pitta • White rice, pasta, noodles • Tortillas and tacos • Couscous, polenta • Cornflour, white flour, sago, tapioca, semolina • Refined breakfast cereals eg Rice Krispies, Special K and Cornflakes. • Plain sweet biscuits eg Rich Tea, shortbread • Sponge/plain cake • Plain crackers, rice cakes • Smooth peanut butter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholemeal, granary, rye bread, white bread with added fibre, brown chapatti or brown pitta • All fruit/nut/seed breads, malt/currant/fruit loaves, fruit muffins or scones and pastries with fruit/dried fruit • Brown rice, pasta, whole wheat couscous, wholegrain noodles • Brown, wholemeal or granary flour, wheatgerm, pearl barley, quinoa, oatmeal • Wholegrain cereals eg. All Bran, Bran Flakes, Weetabix, muesli, porridge, Shredded Wheat • Rye crispbreads, wholemeal crackers, oatcakes • Wholemeal or fruit/nut biscuits, flapjacks, Digestives, fig rolls, fruit cake • All nuts and seeds, crunchy peanut butter
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh ripe, tinned or stewed fruit without skin, pith or pips • Fruit juices without pulp • Smooth coconut milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All fruit with skins, stalks, seeds and stones • All dried fruit • Dates, figs, prunes • Coconut • Green bananas
Vegetables and potatoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well cooked vegetables with no skins, stalks or seeds • Strained vegetable juices • Smooth or sieved soups • Sieved tomato sauces eg passata and tomato puree • Boiled, mash, roast potatoes (no skin) • Vegetarians may have small portions of lentils, hummus or mushy peas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All raw or cooked vegetables including stalks, skins, seeds and peel • Cabbage, cassava, celery, curly kale, fennel, leeks, okra, peas, peppers, pumpkin, shallots, spinach, sprouts, sweetcorn, yam, • Soups with pieces eg minestrone • Jacket potato or wedges with skin • Pulses including baked beans, butter beans, kidney beans, chickpeas and lentils
Meat, fish and eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All meat and fish • Eggs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gristly and fatty meat, tough skin, fish skin and bones

Milk and dairy products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk, cream, sour cream, crème fraiche, fromage frais • Cheese (any) • Smooth yoghurt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any milk products containing fruits, nuts, seeds or cereals
Fluids	Low fibre/non-stimulant fluids	Fibre rich/stimulant fluids
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit and vegetable juices • Milk, milk-shakes • Still water soft drinks, squash • Decaffeinated tea, coffee or cola • Hot chocolate, Ovaltine, Horlicks, Bovril • Herbal tea, wheat tea and coffee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit and vegetable juices with pulp • Prune juice • Caffeinated drinks eg espresso, Red Bull and cola • Smoothies
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tofu, Quorn • All fats and oils • Plain crisps, plain pretzels (no sesame seeds) • Plain cakes, puddings and pastries made with white flour • Jelly, ice-cream, milk puddings, custard, sorbet • Honey, sugar, syrup, jelly style preserves, marmalade with no peel, • Sweets and chocolate without dried fruit or nuts • Ketchup, sauces, dressings, gravy, marmite, bovril • Pepper, salt, herbs • Spices (in moderation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice-cream containing fruit and nuts • Popcorn, tortilla/corn chips • Twiglets, Bombay Mix • Flapjacks and muesli type snack bars • Seeds including pumpkin, sunflower or sesame • Cakes, biscuits, puddings or pies containing oats, nuts, coconut or fruit • Any jams, marmalade, sweet mincemeat • Sweets and chocolate with fruit, nuts, seeds or coconut • Wholegrain mustard, pickles, relish or chutney • Houmous, coleslaw

Contact details for further information

Pelvic Floor Nurse Specialist

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital

Telephone: 01743 261083 (24hr answerphone)

Further information is available from;

- **Patient Advise and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS will act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, they can also help you get support from other local or national agencies. PALS, is a confidential service.

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691

Princess Royal Hospital, Tel: 01952 282888

Other Sources of Information

- **The Pelvic Floor Society**

A national multi-professional body involved in supporting excellence in clinical practice, education and research, clinical standards, patient information and engagement in the commissioning of pelvic floor services.

Telephone: 020 7973 0307

Website: www.thepelvicfloorsociety.co.uk

- **NHS 111**

A fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Telephone: 111 (free from a landline or mobile)

Website: www.nhs.uk

- **Patient UK**

Provides leaflets on health and disease translated into 11 other languages as well as links to national support/self help groups and a directory of UK health websites.

Website: www.patient.info

- **Self-Help UK**

This is a directory of self-help groups and charities.

Website: www.selfhelp.org.uk

- **The IBS network**

Information, advice and support to patients with IBS and working with health care professionals to facilitate IBS self management.

Telephone: 0114 272 3253

Website: www.theibsnetwork.org

- **Bladder and Bowel Foundation**

For more information about bladder and bowel conditions, treatment and support

Telephone: 0870 770 3246

Website: www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

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