

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

Your name: _____

Your dietitian: _____

Dietitian contact number: 0118 322 7116

Introduction

This leaflet gives dietary and lifestyle advice on managing your IBS. Please contact your dietitian for more detailed advice.

What is IBS?

IBS affects one in five adults. There is no test to diagnose IBS and the exact cause of IBS is unknown. Before making a diagnosis of IBS it is important to exclude other conditions such as Coeliac Disease or inflammatory bowel disease as they can cause similar symptoms. This can be done through a blood test at your GP surgery.

If you require a blood test for Coeliac Disease you should include gluten (found in regular bread, pasta and cereals) in at least one meal per day for at least 6 weeks prior to the blood test. If you avoid gluten during this time your blood test results may not be accurate.

What are the symptoms of IBS?

Symptoms vary from one person to another and may include:

- Diarrhoea and/or constipation.
- Abdominal pain, which may ease after opening the bowels.
- Wind and/or bloating.
- A feeling of urgency to open your bowels.
- Passing mucus.
- Nausea.
- A feeling of fullness, or the need to open the bowels even after just having been to the toilet.

Managing your IBS

Your doctor may suggest trialling medication to help manage your IBS symptoms. These can help manage IBS symptoms but it is important to make changes to your diet and lifestyle for the long-term.

Healthy eating for IBS

There is no specific diet to follow which completely relieves symptoms for all IBS sufferers. However, there are a number of dietary changes that may help to reduce your symptoms. You can start by making sure your diet is well balanced with the different food groups as explained below.

Follow a healthy well balanced diet:

- Include 5 portions of fruits and vegetables every day (but see advice in the IBS Wind and bloating leaflet regarding fruit if you suffer with wind and bloating).
- Eat a variety of starchy carbohydrates, eg pasta, potatoes or rice, and include these at each mealtime.
- Aim for 2 portions of protein, eg meat, fish, quorn, each day.
- Aim for 2 to 3 portions of dairy foods per day.
- Limit your intake of high fat and high sugar foods.

Top tips:

- Eat your meals at a regular time each day.
- Avoid over eating and eating late at night.
- Take time to sit down to eat meals, eat slowly and chew each mouthful well.
- Restrict caffeine intake to 3 cups per day e.g. tea, energy drinks, coffee and cola, choosing decaffeinated versions instead.
- Reduce intake of fizzy drinks.
- Keep to recommended limits for alcohol with at least 2 free alcohol free days per week. Men and women should have no more than 14 units per week, (2-3 units per day).

A healthy lifestyle for IBS

Lifestyle factors such as stress, anxiety and a lack of physical activity may also be responsible for causing symptoms of IBS. Top tips to help include:

- Take time to relax and try relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga, relaxation tapes, aromatherapy or massage.
- Slow down and leave plenty of time to eat your meals.
- Take regular exercise e.g. walking, cycling or swimming.

If you feel that high stress or anxiety levels are of a particular concern, speak to your GP or dietitian for further support with managing this.

Food intolerance

True allergy to food is relatively uncommon and unlikely to cause IBS. Food intolerance on the other hand can cause IBS type symptoms. There is currently no scientifically validated test that can detect food intolerance, and the only method is through careful exclusion and reintroduction of foods, which should be done under the supervision of a dietitian.

Lactose intolerance

It is important to exclude lactose intolerance as a cause of your symptoms. Lactose is a natural sugar in milk and some dairy products. Your doctor may suggest a lactose breath test to diagnose this; however this test is often inconclusive. If you suspect dairy products such as milk or yoghurt worsen your symptoms, it may be worth trialling a low lactose diet. This involves exclusion of cows' milk based yoghurt and milk. You can choose lactose-free versions, or dairy-free alternatives such as soya, rice, oat or nut milk based products instead. Cream, butter and cheese are low in lactose and do not usually need to be avoided.

Useful contacts

British Dietetic Association 'Food Fact Sheets'
www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home

The IBS Network
Tel: 0114 272 32 53
Email: info@theibsnetwork.org
Web: www.theibsnetwork.org

Talking Health - Berkshire Healthcare
Tel: 0300 365 2000
Email: talkingtherapies@berkshire.nhs.uk
Web: www.talkinghealth.berkshire.nhs.uk

Notes

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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