

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS): Diarrhoea

Your name: _____

Your dietitian: _____

Dietitian contact number: 0118 322 7116

Introduction

This leaflet gives dietary and lifestyle advice on managing the symptoms of diarrhoea. Please contact your dietitian for more detailed advice.

What is diarrhoea?

Diarrhoea is a common symptom of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) which can be caused by increased sensitivity to certain types of food and drink. Depending on your current diet, some changes may help to control your symptoms.

Dietary fibre

Dietary fibre affects the firmness of your stools and how often you pass them. Dietary fibre is found in many foods including:

- Cereals such as wheat, oats, barley, rye, corn, rice, and cereal products such as bread, breakfast cereals and pasta. Wholegrain and wholemeal varieties will contain the most fibre.
- Nuts and seeds.
- Beans and pulses.
- Fruits and vegetables.

Decreasing dietary fibre may help reduce symptoms of diarrhoea. Choose lower fibre alternatives such as white bread, pasta and rice. Removing skins from vegetables and fruits, avoiding the pith and choosing those without pips and seeds can help reduce fibre intake.

Fructose

Fruit contains fructose, a sugar that is not completely digested in some people with IBS. Limit fresh and dried fruit to 3 portions per day, including a maximum of one small glass of fruit juice. One portion of fruit is about 80g. Include extra vegetables to make sure you reach the recommended '5 a day'.

Sorbitol and xylitol

Sorbitol and xylitol occur naturally in fruits but they are also used as artificial, low calorie sweeteners. They are poorly absorbed by the gut and can have a laxative effect if consumed in large quantities. Avoid sugar free sweets such as chocolate, mints and gums and food products containing sorbitol or xylitol.

Starchy food

Starchy foods such as potatoes, rice, pasta, and bread that have been reheated, cooked and cooled, or processed contain more of a type of starch that is not completely digested by the body, potentially leading to wind and bloating.

Choose:

- Freshly cooked potatoes, boiled rice, pasta and bread.

Limit the following:

- Ready meals containing potato, rice or pasta.
- Part baked and reheated breads (e.g. garlic bread and pizza).
- Potato, rice or pasta salads.
- Potato snacks (e.g. crisps, potato waffles and chips).

Fluid

- Replace lost fluids by including at least 8 to 10 cups (1.5 to 2 litres or 3 to 4 pints) of fluid per day such as water, herbal teas or squash.
- Limit caffeinated drinks (e.g. tea, energy drinks, coffee and cola) to a maximum of 3 cups per day.
- Restrict intake of fizzy drinks as these can aggravate IBS symptoms.
- Keep to recommended limits for alcohol with at least 2 alcohol free days per week. Men and women should have no more than 14 units per week (2 to 3 units per day).

Probiotics

Probiotics are good bacteria found in certain food products and may also be bought as supplements. Probiotics can help to improve the balance of bacteria in the gut, with emerging evidence that they can also improve symptoms of IBS.

There are a range of different probiotic products available, each containing different types and quantities of bacteria. If you choose to use a probiotic you may wish to start by trying a yoghurt or fermented milk drink. You should use the product as directed by the manufacturer for a minimum of 4 weeks, monitoring the effect on your symptoms. If a product does not appear to have any effect, then consider trying a different brand and speak with your dietitian for further advice.

High fat foods

Diarrhoea may also be caused or worsened by eating too many high fat foods such as; crisps, fast food, burgers, sausages, chips and cakes. Try reducing the amount of these you eat as well as using less oil, butter, mayonnaise and cream. Replace with low fat alternatives and grill, poach, steam, boil or bake instead of frying foods.

Spicy foods

Spicy foods may trigger diarrhoea in some individuals. If you find this is the case after trialling a restriction, consider avoiding spicy foods.

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 diarrhoea. Top tips to help include:

- Relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga, relaxation tapes, aromatherapy or massage.
- Slowing down and leaving plenty of time to eat your meals.
- Taking 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 Talking Health for further support with managing this.

Useful contacts

Talking Health – Berkshire Healthcare, Tel: 0300 365 2000

Email: talkingtherapies@berkshire.nhs.uk

Web: www.talkinghealth.berkshire.nhs.uk

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

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