

# IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)

## What is IBS?

A functional gastrointestinal disorder, it is a group of symptoms not a disease

IBS is a chronic, and often a life-long condition. 75% of people continue to have symptoms 5 years after diagnosis.

It's very common - affecting around 10-20% of people, mostly women aged 20-50.



## Diagnosis:

There is not a specific test for IBS.

It is important to seek medical advice to rule out IBD and Crohns.

Does not cause any obvious abnormalities in your digestive tract.

Diagnosis is usually based on symptoms.

## Symptoms

People with IBS often experience

- Abdominal pain/cramps
- Bloating or swelling in the tummy
- Gas/wind
- Changes in bowel habits: increase or decrease in bowel movements

Symptoms are often made worse by eating.

## Types of IBS

The management of IBS varies based on its subtypes:

- IBS-C - is mainly IBS with constipation
- IBS-D - is mainly IBS with Diarrhoea
- IBS-M - is IBS mixed (both constipation and diarrhoea)
- IBS-U - is IBS unclassified

## Causes of IBS

There is no single cause of IBS, but these things may play a role:

- Diet -e.g., caffeine, alcohol, FODMAPS
- Stress and anxiety
- SIBO
- Gastroenteritis
- Single/ prolonged antibiotic use
- Surgery
- Gut bacteria ratio

Each person's triggers can be different.

## Diet and IBS?

Diet is one of the most important ways to manage IBS symptoms. You may benefit from simple changes like:

- Eating regular meals without rushing
- Cutting down on caffeine, alcohol, and fizzy drinks
- Limit high fibre foods (if you have diarrhoea)
- Trying smaller meals if you get bloated
- Drinking at least 8 cups of fluid daily
- Being mindful of fat intake (if you have meal related abdominal pain)
- Reducing spicy meal components (if needed)
- Reducing FODMAPS foods (if needed).

## Caffeine and IBS

Significant association between caffeine intake and IBS severity.

Assess caffeine intake and, if related to symptoms, consider reducing intake.

If IBS -D - reduce or avoid caffeine intake.

## Alcohol and IBS

Gastrointestinal symptoms frequently reported with drinking wine or beer.

- Binge drinking may worsen symptoms.
- Drinking light to moderate amounts of alcohol may not increase IBS symptoms.

Alcohol & IBS-D - it may contribute to diarrhoea.

## FODMAPS and IBS

FODMAPs are a group of natural sugars found in certain foods that are hard for some people to digest. These include:

- Fructose (e.g. honey, apples, mango)
- Lactose (e.g. milk, yogurt)
- Fructans (e.g. garlic, onions, wheat)
- GOS (e.g. beans, lentils)
- Polyols (e.g. sorbitol in sugar-free gum, some fruits like pears)

A low FODMAP diet has been shown to be more effective than standard dietary advice for symptom control in IBS

A low FODMAP diet should only be trialled if general dietary advice is unsuccessful.

## Additional help

Besides diet, other approaches that may help:

- Stress management: Mindfulness, meditation, or talking therapy can reduce flare-ups
- Exercise: Regular gentle activity like walking or yoga supports digestion
- Probiotics: Some people benefit from certain probiotic strains
- Peppermint oil: Shown to help with gut pain and cramps
- Linseeds (flaxseeds): May help if you are constipated

Important: IBS affects everyone differently. What helps one person might not help another. Keeping a food and symptom diary can make a big difference. Get in touch with me for personalised support to help manage your IBS symptoms.

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