

IBS

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

WHAT IS IBS?

IBS is a functional gut disorder, meaning the normal way the intestine moves, the sensitivity of nerves in the intestine, or the way the brain controls the intestinal functions, is impaired. The exact cause of IBS is still not understood, but the research suggests a combination of factors can lead to IBS: family history of IBS, stress, previous gut infections and an imbalance in gut bacteria are a few potential causes.

The diagnostic criteria for IBS is defined as recurrent abdominal pain or discomfort for at least 3 days per month for the last 3 months, with at least two of the following:

- Improvement of symptoms with defecation
- Symptom onset associated with a change in the frequency of stool
- Symptom onset associated with a change in the form/appearance of stool

Along with ruling out other gut conditions and ensuring there is no symptoms such as blood in stool, anemia, unintended weight loss, and signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer.

SYMPTOMS

- People with IBS normally experience recurring episodes of diarrhea (IBS-D), constipation (IBS-C) or a mixture of both (IBS-M), alongside intense cramping that can last for hours.
- Symptoms can also include bloating, gas, abdominal distension, intermittent indigestion, nausea, and feeling full or uncomfortable after eating.
- Some people may have symptoms in their throat/upper stomach area, including burping, reflux-type symptoms, chest pain and feeling a lump in the throat or stomach. These symptoms may indicate functional dyspepsia, which is a functional gut disorder of the upper digestive tract related to IBS.
Talk to your doctor about differentiating between the two based on your symptoms.

DID YOU KNOW?

IBS is the most common functional digestive disorder, affecting between 13-20% of Canadians. However, only 30% of people with symptoms will consult a physician to seek help. As with any poorly understood condition, IBS has developed a stigma where individuals feel that it's all in their head. IBS isn't something you just need to learn to live with; it is a real disease with treatment options to manage symptoms. Everyone's experience with IBS is different, so it's important to talk to your doctor about your symptoms and how best to manage them.

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WHY IS NUTRITION IMPORTANT FOR IBS?

Some people find that there are certain foods that may trigger their symptoms. The low FODMAP diet is strongly supported by research as a means to help reduce their IBS symptoms. FODMAP stands for Fermentable Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides and Polyols, and refers to certain groups of carbohydrates that can be poorly digested in our guts. These carbohydrates can be fermented by gut bacteria and may be causing the unpleasant symptoms of IBS.

The low FODMAP diet is a short-term diet that reduces the total amount of these carbohydrates in your diet, and re-introducing foods is very important to gut health. Because it can be very restrictive and complex, the low FODMAP diet should only be implemented under the supervision of a trained doctor or dietitian.

START REDUCING YOUR IBS SYMPTOMS TODAY:

1. Talk to your physician about other conditions that could cause IBS symptoms. These need to be ruled out before starting a treatment plan for IBS.
2. Create a food and symptom journal. This may help you to determine trends in your symptoms, and will be helpful for when you see a dietitian or doctor for management of IBS.
3. Use MyFitnessPal – a food journaling app - to aim for at least 25 grams of fibre a day and less than 100 grams total sugar.
4. If your symptoms are moderate to severe, a low FODMAP diet with a focus on gut health is likely to benefit you. Talk to your doctor or dietitian about if this diet is suited for you.

NEED MORE HELP? SEE A DIETITIAN FOR INDIVIDUALIZED CARE.

IBS symptoms can vary, and management of lifestyle and nutrition can be complex.

In many situations, the low FODMAP diet is necessary to reduce symptoms. This should be implemented under supervision of a trained professional, as long-term use may be harmful to gut health.

At Ignite Nutrition, our team of registered dietitians are trained in medical nutrition therapy and specialize in gut and digestive health. Seeing a dietitian can help you come up with a specific and individualized plan to best manage YOUR symptoms.

To get the nutrition and lifestyle support you need, visit www.ignitenutrition.ca or call 403-808-2348 to book your appointment today!