

# NUTRITION KEYNOTES

## Dietary Guidelines for Irritable Bowel Syndrome



*Goal: To help control the constipation, diarrhea, and pain of irritable bowel syndrome with healthy food and lifestyle choices.*

### What Is Irritable Bowel Syndrome?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a chronic condition of unknown origin. It is most likely caused by bacterial overgrowth, inflammation, abnormal muscle contractions, or an oversensitive colon or large intestine causing abdominal cramping, constipation, diarrhea, gas, and bloating. The effects of diet on IBS vary from person to person. Stress, depression, and certain foods can all make the symptoms worse depending on the cause of your IBS.

### Foods or Supplements That May Help

- Eat **high-fiber foods** (25 to 35 grams per day) such as whole-grain breads and cereals; fruits; vegetables with the skin; and dried beans, peas, and lentils. If gas is a concern, eat fewer gas-producing foods (see list on back) or try Beano.
- **Bulk-forming laxatives** such as Metamucil and Konsyl (psyllium husk) or Benefiber help regulate bowel function, easing both constipation and diarrhea. Add fiber slowly to prevent gas and bloating.

- **Drink** at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day with increased fiber intake.
- Look for **probiotics** (*acidophilus*, *Bifidobacterium infantis*) found in supplements and some foods such as yogurt or kefir.

### Foods That May Cause Problems

Not everyone will need to eliminate all of these foods. Start with foods you know are a problem for you. Try eliminating these foods from your diet. Add one food back at a time every five days to see how you respond.

- **Lactose intolerance** is a common problem. Try lactose-free dairy; calcium-fortified soy, rice, or almond milk; Lactaid; or Dairy Ease. If you are not sure whether you are lactose intolerant, drink two cups of milk and see if your symptoms get worse.
- **Sugar and processed carbohydrates** such as honey, jams, jellies, candy, white rice, cakes, cookies, pastries, pie, donuts, white bread, other products made with white flour, and sweetened breakfast cereals.
- **Grape or prune juice**

(over)

For more information, please contact your registered dietitian or local Health Education Department.

- **Sugar alcohols** such as sorbitol, maltitol, mannitol, xylitol, hydrogenated starch hydrolysate, and fructose found in sugar-free and low-carb foods.
- **Wheat**—you may have gluten intolerance syndrome without actually having celiac disease.
- **Fatty foods** such as red meat, chicken with skin, whole dairy, oil, margarine, fried foods, or nuts.
- **Gas-producing foods** such as broccoli, brussels sprouts, corn, cabbage, cauliflower, eggs, garlic, cucumbers, onions, peppers, pickles, radishes, turnips, sauerkraut, Swiss chard, raw apples, melons, dried beans, peas, and lentils, carbonated beverages, and greasy or fatty foods.
- **Hot beverages**
- **Caffeine**—coffee, cola, tea, and chocolate.
- **Alcohol**

## Additional Guidelines

- Keeping a food and mood diary will help identify what worsens your symptoms and allow you to make changes to your diet and lifestyle.
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals. Do not skip meals.
- Chew food thoroughly.
- Eat slowly in a comfortable, relaxed environment.
- Avoid tobacco products.
- Because stress is a major contributor to IBS, it is important to manage it. Meditation, deep breathing, aerobic exercise, and sharing your concerns with another person can all help to decrease stress. Find a stress management class at [kp.org/classes](http://kp.org/classes).
- Herbal supplements such as aloe can aggravate irritable bowel symptoms.
- If simple carbohydrates are a problem, limit fruit to two servings per day.
- Drink 6 to 8 cups of water every day.