





Irritable Bowel Syndrome

-  Your doctor has diagnosed irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Many people have this common complaint. It is called a syndrome because there are a number of different symptoms. The purpose of this leaflet is to explain what causes IBS and to provide some helpful advice on how you can control your symptoms.


WHAT IS IBS?

-  The condition is very common and a considerable nuisance but it should not be confused with other more serious diseases. IBS is not linked, nor leads to any serious illness.
-  Your internal organs of digestion (intestines) are like a muscular tube which, for a number of reasons, can contract too tightly, resulting in spasm. In the same way that sportsmen get cramp, the muscles of the gut go into spasm, which often causes pain.




WHAT ARE THE COMMON SYMPTOMS?

-  There are a number of symptoms which are typical of IBS, although you will not experience all of them at the same time.
- Abdominal pain - often relieved after passing wind, or by a bowel movement.
 - Bowel disturbance - either diarrhoea or constipation and sometimes an alternation between the two.
 - A feeling of incomplete emptying of the bowels.
 - Small, hard, pellet-like stools or sometimes ribbon-like and perhaps covered in mucus. Mucus may also be passed on its own.
 - A feeling of fullness and bloating.

SOME ADVICE ON HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

-  There is no single solution for the irritable bowel, but the symptoms can disappear after a time. However, many IBS sufferers have found relief by learning how to control some of the symptoms.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF IBS?

-  As common as it is, there is no simple cause of IBS. Stress is implicated as a major factor and many doctors also believe that a lack of dietary fibre is a contributory factor.
-  While stress and anxiety are a part of everyday life, too much stress and anxiety can make your body react badly. Just as some people suffer tension headaches, others may experience the symptoms of IBS.
-  Your own lifestyle might expose you to more stress than usual, although some people may have an exaggerated response to stress and anxiety. Unfortunately when the symptoms appear, they are something more to worry about. This can create a vicious cycle, causing future anxiety and continuation of the symptoms.

TRY TO AVOID STRESS

☞ Of course, it is virtually impossible to live completely free of stress, but you can reduce life's stresses to some extent by following these simple suggestions. You should try to make a habit of these changes in lifestyle so that they become a part of your everyday life.

- Slow down, leave plenty of time for journeys and meals.
- Take 10-20 minutes a day to yourself in a quiet place to relax and 'wind down'. (There are many books or tapes which can teach you relaxation techniques.)
- Take regular exercise, have a short walk every day.

EAT SENSIBLY

☞ While diet might be a contributory factor, your own doctor will advise you if you should change or alter your diet. For instance, it may be that you should increase the amount of fibre you eat.

☞ The key to a balanced diet

Eat plenty of fibre		- fresh vegetables, cereals, fruit and wholemeal bread
Control the amount of	fat	- avoid fried foods, cut the fat off meat.
	sugar	- avoid excessive cakes, sweets and chocolate.

DEALING WITH THE PAIN

☞ You may be able to achieve relief by changing your diet and lifestyle. This may not be enough to eliminate the symptoms and you may still experience some pain from the gut spasm.

☞ Your doctor may give you treatment to reduce this spasm and to relieve the pain.

☞ It is important to follow your doctor's advice carefully. Only take medicines as directed by your doctor. Try to keep to any dietary changes and take note of your doctor's suggestions to change your lifestyle.

DIETARY FIBRE IN COMMON FOODS

		g/100g			g/100g
Bread	Brown	5.1	Vegetables	Peas(frozen)	12.0
	White	2.7		Potatoes(baked/old)	2.5
	Wholemeal	8.5		(boiled/new)	2.0
Cereals	Muesli	7.4		Chips/frozen/fried	3.2
	Porridge	0.8		Spinach	6.3
	Puffed Wheat	15.4		Sweetcorn (tinned)	5.7
	Shredded Wheat	12.3	Fruits	Apples (peeled)	2.0
Biscuits	Crispbread	11.7		Apricots (dried)	24.0
	Digestive	5.5		Bananas	3.4
Vegetables	(boiled unless stated)			Figs (dried)	18.5
	Baked Beans (tinned)	7.3		Oranges	2.0
	Brussel Sprouts	2.9		Peaches	1.4
	Cabbage	2.5		Pears	1.7
	Carrots	3.1		Prunes (dried)	16.1
	Cauliflower	1.8	Nuts	Almonds	14.3
	Celery	2.2		Coconut (desiccated)	23.5
			Peanuts	8.1	