

# *Diet*

## for Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) Constipation





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# What is IBS constipation?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome is a disorder of gastrointestinal (GI) function without any obvious inflammation or damage. Symptoms occur quite frequently and are often triggered by changes in diet and the effect of stress and life changes on the way the gut works.

Common recurrent symptoms include abdominal pain or discomfort, often reported as cramping, along with changes in bowel habits. IBS has been subcategorised based on the symptoms as: IBS with diarrhoea; IBS with constipation; or mixed, which includes both diarrheal and constipation traits.

The definition of IBS with constipation (IBS-C) may include: fewer than three bowel movements a week, the passage of dry, hard or small stools, the need to strain to pass stools, and a feeling of incomplete emptying of the bowel. In IBS, constipation is often associated with bloating, abdominal distension, and abdominal pain, and may occasionally alternate with diarrhoea.



# *Dietary advice* for constipation

The causes of IBS are not well understood, however dietary and lifestyle changes can help to alleviate symptoms.

Eating a healthy diet, with the right balance of foods from the four main food groups is a good first step towards reducing symptoms. This includes:

- Starchy carbohydrates: bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and wholegrains
- Vegetables, salads and fruit - fresh, frozen, or dried
- Meat, fish, eggs, nuts, beans & vegetarian protein alternatives
- Milk, cheese, yoghurt

If you are constipated, it is important to aim for at least 5 portions of fruit or vegetables a day. This is not only for the associated health benefits but also for the fibre contribution to the diet. It is also worth limiting highly processed foods as these tend to be higher in fat, salt and sugar and often lower in fibre.



## Dietary Fibre

Dietary fibre is predominantly composed of all the constituents of cereals, vegetables and fruits that cannot be digested in the small intestine. It includes the storage polysaccharides of tubers and seeds, the cellulose structure of stems and leaves, the pulp and the skins of fruits and the husks and hard coats of nuts and seeds. It may also encompass resistant starches formed when wheat, potato or rice are allowed to cool and are then reheated causing the starch molecules to clump together and resist digestion.

Most dietary fibre, except the hard woody coats or husks of seeds, gets broken down by bacterial action in the colon. This tends to retain more fluid in the bowel and generates gas, stimulating secretion and peristalsis, encouraging the proliferation of bacteria and adding to the bulk of colonic contents. Most people do not eat enough fibre. Increasing dietary fibre can therefore help to soften the stools, making them easy to pass and relieving symptoms of constipation. As you increase the fibre in your diet, increase the fluid you drink as fibre softens the stools by retaining water in the gut.

Dietary fibre has been somewhat arbitrarily divided into soluble and insoluble components. Insoluble fibre consists of the skins of fruits, the stalks and leaves of vegetables and the husks and hard coats of seeds. It is more slowly broken down by colonic bacteria and its bulk helps to stimulate peristalsis and the evacuation of stools.





Food sources of **insoluble fibre** include:

- Wholewheat, wholemeal bread
- Bran (although not recommended for IBS)
- Skins and pips of fruit
- Stalks and leaves of vegetables
- Wholegrain/wholemeal cereals
- Nuts and seeds

Studies have suggested that the hard husks of cereal seeds, such as coarse wheat bran, directly irritate the colon causing more pain and bloating. For this reason, dieticians and gastroenterologists no longer advocate adding coarse wheat bran to the diet to treat constipation, but advise switching to wholegrain cereals (e.g. oats, barley, rye, spelt, buckwheat, whole-wheat flakes/bisks, muesli, Shreddies) and using wholemeal flour for cooking.

Soluble fibre is more completely fermented in the colon, but retains fluid and stimulates bacterial proliferation, softening the stools and making them easier to pass.





Food sources of **soluble fibre** include:

- Oatmeal, barley, rye
- Fruit (very ripe banana, apple)
- Root vegetables
- Pulses (lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans)

While soluble fibre encourages bowel movements, it often contains a mixture of large molecular weight polysaccharides and smaller oligosaccharides. The latter are a component of FODMAP (*Fermentable Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides and Polyols*) foods and are rapidly fermented, distending the sensitive colon and inducing symptoms of wind, bloating and stomach cramps, but FODMAPs are also found in sources of insoluble fibre.

Gaseous fruit and vegetables include apricot, apples, pears, green banana (unripe), beans, beetroot, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, leeks, onions, undercooked or cooked & cooled potatoes, radishes, sprouts, and sweetcorn. Therefore, if you suffer from bloating and pain as well as constipation, you might be more comfortable to opt for aubergine, berries, carrots, courgette, dates, marrow, parsnips, peas, peppers and salad leaves or to increase fibre consumption slowly to reduce these unwanted effects.





Many plant components contain both soluble and insoluble components of fibre. For example, the skin of prunes are composed of insoluble fibre and the pulp and juice soluble fibre. A ripe banana contains more soluble fibre, whereas an unripe, green banana would contain a higher amount of insoluble fibre. Finally, linseeds are a mix of insoluble fibre in the seed coat and soluble fibre in the mucilage coating.

A British Dietetic Association (BDA)<sup>1</sup> study has advised the dietary supplementation of ground linseeds for a 3-month trial to register any improvements in constipation, abdominal pain and bloating. Start with one teaspoon to one tablespoon per day and gradually increase, but **do not exceed four tablespoons (24 g) per day**, and ensure fluid intake is increased alongside, approximately one small glass (150ml) per tablespoon of linseed. Linseeds can easily be added to foods such as yoghurt, breakfast cereal, soup, and salad.



1 McKenzie YA, Alder A, Anderson W, Wills A, Goddard L, Gulia P, Jankovich E, Mutch P, Reeves LB, Singer A & Lomer MCE on behalf of Gastroenterology Specialist Group of the British Dietetic Association. (2012) British Dietetic Association evidence-based practice guidelines for the dietary management of irritable bowel syndrome in adults. *J Hum Nutr Diet.* 25, 260–274





## *Fluid*

It is important to make sure you drink plenty of fluid as the body is very efficient at extracting fluid from the colon when it is needed for bodily functions, which, even when only slightly dehydrated, can result in harder stools.

Aim for approximately 1-2 litres (six to eight glasses) of fluid a day, or more while exercising and when it's hot. It can help to carry a bottle of water or diluted fruit drinks with you to avoid dehydration.

Remember that drinking alcohol can cause dehydration, so only drink alcohol in moderation and drink plenty of water as well!





## *Exercise*

Regular exercise may also help to ease symptoms of IBS-C as well as provide many other health benefits. You don't have to join a gym; many forms of exercise are beneficial. Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise a day, at least five times a week. Try to find ways to build exercise into your normal daily routine such as walking to the shops and taking the stairs instead of the lift.

Exercise includes anything which raises your heart rate and breathing rate, such as:

- Walking
- Running
- Cycling
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Team sports
- DVD workouts
- Skipping





## *Relaxation*

Just as important as exercise is relaxation, especially around meal times. Try to lead a balanced lifestyle which allows time for relaxing activities and time to do the things you enjoy, as well as enjoying a meal.

Make time for yourself, relax, practice mindfulness read a book, listen to music, write, paint, take a walk, or try yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, meditation or carry out simple breathing exercises, whatever you find helps you to relax.





## *What about probiotics?*

Our guts are home to thousands of different gut bacteria that coexist with us and even provide beneficial functions such as the production of certain vitamins, priming the immune system, preventing infections and breaking down indigestible foods. Illness, stress and antibiotics deplete colonic bacterial populations and increase susceptibility to illness.

There is some suggestion that bacteria that generate methane are associated with constipation, but little data to support the use of probiotics to treat constipation.



# Day to day



## Ideas for breakfast, lunch and dinner

A typical day could look something like this:

### Breakfast

wholegrain cereal mix of jumbo oats, wheat flakes and some nuts or seeds (linseed) with low fat milk and a small glass of prune juice

### Lunch

mackerel or ham salad with brown rice; or for a sandwich option go for those with plenty of salad in the filling and have a piece of fruit to follow

### Dinner

Chicken and root vegetable stew, with a live yoghurt and/or piece of fruit for dessert

Drink water throughout the day and snack on nuts, seeds or dried fruit. Be sure to take some suitable snacks and bottled water with you when on the go, travelling, or at work, so you don't succumb to buying a low fibre snack or lunch, that will counter your efforts to manage your symptoms.

You could go for a walk before dinner to get your appetite really going!



## *Foods to avoid or limit*

High fat or highly refined foods. Such as fast food, crisps, chocolate, cake, creamy sauces, fatty meats, spreads, etc. Try to eat and cook with fresh ingredients and whole foods where possible.

Drinks with alcohol, caffeine or large amounts of artificial sweeteners.



## *Keep in mind*

What works for one person does not work for all! Have a go with certain foods and see how you get on. If you believe a certain food is causing you problems, omit it for a few weeks, but be sure to give it a trial again so you are not avoiding foods unnecessarily.

Increase fibre slowly to avoid unwanted side effects and ensure you also increase fluid intakes at the same time.

Take your time when eating and relax. Not rushing your food and chewing properly will aid the digestion process. Try some relaxation techniques.

Eating smaller meals more often or smaller portions. This will keep your digestive system working optimally.

# Recipes

Here are some high fibre recipe options. If certain ingredients are not suitable for you, adapt the recipes to match your personal tolerability.

## Muesli

### Ingredients

**Oats, barley flakes, spelt flakes**

**Chopped nuts:** almonds, walnuts, brazil, cashews, pistachios, macadamia, peanuts, hazelnuts, pecans

**Seeds:** linseed (flax), sunflower, sesame, pumpkin, chia

**Dried fruit:** prunes, apricots, raisins, dates, figs, peaches

**Fresh fruit:** banana, berries, cherry, pear, mango, pineapple, etc

**Shredded coconut**

**Cinnamon** if desired

**Milk/live yogurt**

### Method

Make up your own muesli using a mix of any of these ingredients, varying the amount of each, depending on tolerance.

To save time you can mix your preferred ingredients together (excluding fresh fruit) and store in an airtight container ready to pour out, adding your milk and fruit in the morning.





# Chicken and Root Vegetable Stew

## Ingredients

**Olive oil**

**Onion, chopped**

**Garlic, crushed**

**Root vegetables**, chopped  
carrots, parsnips, swede, turnip,  
celeriac, sweet potato

**Chicken breast**

**Herbs & Spices** mixed,  
rosemary, coriander, paprika,  
turmeric, thyme, cumin, pepper

**Chicken stock** (cube or  
homemade)

**Prune juice**

## Method

Using one pot on the hob, begin by frying the onion for a few minutes in a glug of oil, then garlic.

Add the root vegetables of your choice to the pot and your desired herbs. Add the chopped chicken and stir fry till browned. Meanwhile prepare your chicken stock in water, add approximately 1/3 prune juice to 2/3 stock, give it a stir and add it to the pot so everything has a good covering.

Cover and leave to simmer for 30-40 minutes, then serve with wholegrain rice, bread or mashed potato.





## Prune Juice Mocktail

### Ingredients

150ml prune juice

150ml soda water

50ml fruit puree

Slice of lemon

### Method

Mix all ingredients with a little crushed ice and serve in a tall glass with lemon to decorate.



# Bean Salad

## Ingredients

**Mixed salad leaves**

**Tin mixed beans**, washed

**Tomato**, chopped

**Cucumber**, chopped

**Avocado**, peeled pitted and diced

**Carrot**, grated

**Feta cheese** if desired

**Dressing:** vinegars, herbs, spices

**Seeds:** linseed (flax), sunflower, sesame, pumpkin, chia

**Optional side:** Sweet potato jacket, wholegrain rice, quinoa, couscous, wholemeal bread

## Method

Make up your own salad using any variety of what is listed and other preferred options. The beans and seeds add a great deal of fibre so go carefully at first with smaller portions to get used to your own tolerance levels.

In a bowl, mix together the leaves, beans, tomato, cucumber, avocado, grated carrot and feta.

Add the dressing of your choice and sprinkle seeds on top.

Serve with one of the suggested optional sides.





## Pizza

### Ingredients

#### *Base:*

**2.5 cups wholewheat flour**

**2.25 tsp active dry yeast**

**½ tsp salt**

**1 cup warm water**

**1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil**

**1 tsp sugar**

#### *Toppings ideas:*

**Cheese/mozzarella**

**Tomato puree**

**Vegetables/fruit:** courgette, tomato, mushroom, capers, olives, pepper, spinach, apricot, onion, aubergine, etc

**Meat/fish:** Chicken, ham, anchovies, turkey, tuna, chorizo, shellfish, salmon, etc

**Herbs/spices**

### Method

Combine yeast, water and sugar in a small bowl, let sit for 5 minutes.

Mix together 2 cups flour and salt and in a well in the middle, add the yeast mixture and olive oil.

Stir together then knead for 5 minutes. Add flour in 1 tbsp increments until it is no longer sticky.

Make a ball and leave covered in a greased bowl to rise for up to an hour.

Preheat oven to 240°C.

Knock down risen dough and shape into a ball. Using spare flour on the surface to prevent sticking roll out. Add your desired toppings.

Place pizza in the oven and bake for 10-15 minutes or until all ingredients are baked.

Rest before slicing and top with salad rocket plus serve with side salad and crunchy veg sticks.

# Prune Juice and Live Yogurt Smoothie

## Ingredients

75ml prune juice

75ml apple juice

75ml live yogurt

## Method

Chill all ingredients before starting.

Put all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth, or alternatively hand mix.





## Spelt Bread

### Ingredients

- 50g/2oz spelt flour
- 10g dried yeast
- 1 tsp salt
- 50g/2oz sunflower seeds or pine nuts
- 50g/2oz sesame seeds
- 50g/2oz linseeds
- 17 fl oz warm water

### Method

Preheat oven to 200°C.  
Grease a loaf tin to begin.  
Combine all the ingredients, adding water last, and turn into the tin. (The bread will be even better if allowed to rise overnight in a cool place prior to cooking!)

Bake for approximately 1 hour, and turn out of the tin. Return bread to oven for a further 5-10 minutes.



# Oatcake

## Ingredients

**250g/8oz oatmeal**

**25g/1oz butter, melted**

**½ tsp bicarbonate of soda**

**Pinch salt**

**150ml hot water**

## Method

Preheat oven to 180°C.

Add the oatmeal, bicarbonate of soda and the salt to a bowl. Then add the butter and water and stir well.

Sprinkle the work surface with oatmeal and roll out the dough to your desired thickness (best to use your hands to bring together first). Use a cutter to shape, then place on a baking tray and bake for about 15 minutes.

Allow to cool before eating (if you can wait)!





# Join the IBS Network

## – We are here to help

We understand how difficult and embarrassing it can be to talk about your symptoms. We know how your symptoms can impact on your life and how miserable they can make you feel. You are not alone. We can offer you support, advice and information to help you live a full and active life again.

There is a wealth of free information on our website. However, if you become a member of The IBS Network you will have access to a large caring community of support. As a member you will have access to our on-line Self Care Plan, our newsletter, our e newsletter and an IBS forum. You will also be able to access one-to-one advice from a health professional via telephone and email. When you sign up you will receive our latest quarterly newsletter, *Gut Reaction*; factsheets you have requested and a 'Can't Wait Card' for you to use when you are out and about.

You can join The IBS Network online at [www.theibsnetwork.org](http://www.theibsnetwork.org) by phoning 0114 272 3253 or by writing to The IBS Network at SOAR Works, 14 Knutton Road, Sheffield S5 9NU.

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