



# Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS): Wind and Bloating

This leaflet gives advice on how to reduce wind and bloating for patients with irritable bowel syndrome.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Your dietitian: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dietitian contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Introduction

Wind and bloating are common symptoms in IBS. Constipation can cause wind and bloating. If you have constipation predominant IBS, managing this can improve wind and bloating symptoms. Wind and bloating can also occur when certain types of carbohydrate reach the bowel and are fermented by gut bacteria. The following advice may be helpful in improving symptoms of wind and bloating.

## Dietary fibre

Dietary fibre is food that passes undigested through the human gut. Different types of fibre (insoluble and soluble) exert different effects on the digestive system.

### Insoluble fibre

Foods such as bran, whole grain and whole wheat breads, cereals, skins of fruit/vegetables, pasta and brown rice are high in insoluble fibre and can worsen symptoms of wind and bloating. If you have a high intake of insoluble fibre you may want to try decreasing this and eat more soluble fibre foods instead.

### Soluble fibre

Foods containing soluble fibre include potatoes, fruits and vegetables, oats and linseeds. These may help to improve symptoms of wind and bloating.

- **How to use oats:** Oats can be included as porridge, oat crackers, oat-based cereals, oat bread or flapjacks. They can also be mixed into soups, stews, sauces, yogurt, crumble topping or used in baking biscuits or bread. Oat bran can also be added to foods.
- **How to use linseeds (also known as flaxseed):** Start with 1 teaspoon of linseeds per day and gradually build up to a maximum of 2 level tablespoons per day. It does not matter whether seeds are golden or brown, whole or ground.  
Drink an extra 150mls with every tablespoon of linseeds.  
Add linseeds to foods such as breakfast cereals, yogurts and soups.  
Give your bowels up to 3 to 6 months to get the full benefit of this change.

## Fruit and vegetables

Fruit contains fructose, a sugar that is not completely digested in some people with IBS. Limit fruit to 3 portions per day, including a maximum of one small (<100ml) glass of fruit juice and a maximum of 10g/1 tablespoon of dried fruit spread evenly across the day. One portion of fresh fruit is about 80g (roughly a handful). Choose lower fructose fruits such as a small banana, grapes, strawberries, raspberries, honeydew/cantaloupe melon, orange, pineapple or rhubarb. Include extra vegetables to make sure you reach the recommended “5 a day.” Try swapping some of your usual choices to the following which are less likely to cause bloating:

- aubergine  lettuce  tomato  carrots  courgettes  cucumber
- green beans  olives  parsnip  peppers  spinach  kale

Limit your intake of gas producing soluble fibre foods - such as cashews, pistachios, onions, garlic, beans and pulses, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts and cabbage.

## Sugar alcohols (polyols)

Sugar alcohols, such as sorbitol, xylitol and mannitol, occur naturally in some fruits such as stone fruits (e.g., prunes, cherries, mango, apricot) but they are also used as artificial, low-calorie sweeteners. They are poorly absorbed by the gut and can cause excessive wind and bloating. Avoid sugar free sweets such as chocolate, mints and gums and food products containing sorbitol, mannitol or xylitol.

## Probiotics

Probiotics are good bacteria found in certain food products and may also be bought as supplements. Probiotics can help to improve the balance of bacteria in the gut, and there is emerging evidence that they can also improve symptoms of IBS.

There are a range of different probiotic products available, each containing different types and quantities of bacteria. If you choose to try a probiotic, you may wish to start by trying a yoghurt or fermented milk drink. You should use the product as directed by the manufacturer for a minimum of 4 weeks, monitoring the effect on your symptoms. If a product does not appear to have any effect, then consider trying a different brand and speak with your dietitian for further advice.

## Fluid

- Drink at least 8 to 10 cups (1.5 to 2 litres or 3 to 4 pints) of fluid per day, especially water or other non-caffeinated drinks such as, herbal teas or squash.
- Limit caffeinated drinks (e.g. tea, energy drinks, coffee and cola); drink no more than 3 cups per day.
- Restrict your intake of fizzy drinks as these can worsen wind and bloating.
- Keep to recommended limits for alcohol with at least 2 alcohol free days per week. Men and women should have no more than 14 units per week (2 to 3 units per day).

## Starchy foods

Starchy foods such as potatoes, rice, pasta, and bread that have been reheated, cooked and cooled or processed, contain more of a type of starch that is not completely digested by the body, potentially leading to wind and bloating.

### Choose:

- Freshly cooked potatoes, boiled rice, pasta and bread

### Limit the following:

- Ready meals containing potato, rice or pasta.
- Part baked and reheated breads (e.g. garlic bread and pizza).
- Potato, rice or pasta salads.
- Potato snacks e.g. crisps, potato waffles and chips

## Lifestyle

- Avoid wearing tight clothes.
- Gentle exercise and stretching can help diffuse trapped gas, e.g. a gentle walk or yoga.
- Try peppermint oil capsules. These may relax gut muscles and relieve bloating triggered by trapped wind. Taken alongside ginger tea, they can also help calm the digestive system down.
- Try Simethicone (e.g. Gas-X, Windcheaters) to help relieve pressure from trapped wind.
- Try using a heat pack on the stomach to help loosen up gut muscles, which may relieve trapped wind.

## Dietary supplements

- Alpha-galactosidase enzymes such as Beano (note contains mannitol) may help improve the digestion of certain carbohydrates such as beans and pulses and reduce symptoms of flatulence.
- Lactase enzyme can be used to digest lactose in individuals with lactose intolerance. Lactase is available as tablets or drops.

## Useful Contacts

British Dietetic Association 'Food Fact Sheets' [www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home](http://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home)

The IBS Network Tel: 0114 272 32 53 Email: [info@theibsnetwork.org](mailto:info@theibsnetwork.org) Web: [www.theibsnetwork.org](http://www.theibsnetwork.org)

Guts UK – [www.gutscharity.org.uk](http://www.gutscharity.org.uk)

Talking Health 'CBT for IBS' - Berkshire Healthcare Tel: 0300 365 2000

Email: [talkingtherapies@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:talkingtherapies@berkshire.nhs.uk) Web: [www.talkinghealth.berkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.talkinghealth.berkshire.nhs.uk)

MIND [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Drinkaware [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

## Useful apps

- **Headspace:** guided meditation and mindfulness <https://www.headspace.com/>
- **Calm:** guided meditation and mindfulness <https://www.calm.com/>
- **Nerva:** gut-directed hypnotherapy to help improve IBS symptoms <https://try.nervaibs.com>

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