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# Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

## Introduction

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Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common disorder. It includes several symptoms, with the most common being abdominal discomfort, abdominal bloating and altered bowel habits.

Many people living with IBS find that living a healthy lifestyle, such as having a balanced and varied diet, exercising on a regular basis and managing stress can lessen the symptoms and help them enjoy their lives more.

## What is IBS?

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Contrary to what you may have been led to believe, IBS is a real condition. It is a functional bowel disorder. If you have IBS, your digestive organs — such as the intestines or colon — look normal but do not function the normal way.

IBS is a common condition, affecting one in five Americans. IBS is not a condition caused by infection or inflammation. Frequently, it is a long-term (chronic) condition. However, unlike many other chronic conditions, IBS is not a condition that will shorten your life. It is unrelated to several other disorders of the digestive system:

- It is not related to inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.
- IBS does not cause cancer, and it does not make a person more likely to develop cancer.

Even though it will not shorten your life, IBS may have significant effects on your quality of life. Improving your quality of life begins with learning about IBS, your symptoms and what to do about them.

## Symptoms

With IBS you may have one or more symptoms at any time; sometimes you may have no symptoms. You may have different combinations of symptoms at different times, as symptoms can come and go.

Any symptom may range from mild to severe, becoming worse with stresses or challenges such as travel, social events, daily routine changes, diet changes, different meals and menstrual cycles. The most common symptoms are the following:

- Abdominal pain and cramping that may improve when you pass gas or have a bowel movement
- Diarrhea that may be urgent, explosive, or worse after meals
- Constipation that may result in discomfort, with straining and a feeling of incompleteness after bowel movements or abdominal fullness or pain
- Diarrhea alternating with constipation
- Bloating, abdominal swelling, or excessive gas
- Mucus with your stools

In addition, some people also have symptoms related to the stomach, such as nausea, indigestion or heartburn.

Tell your health care provider if you experience other symptoms such as abnormal rectal bleeding, weight loss or fever. They are not symptoms of IBS, and may need to be investigated.

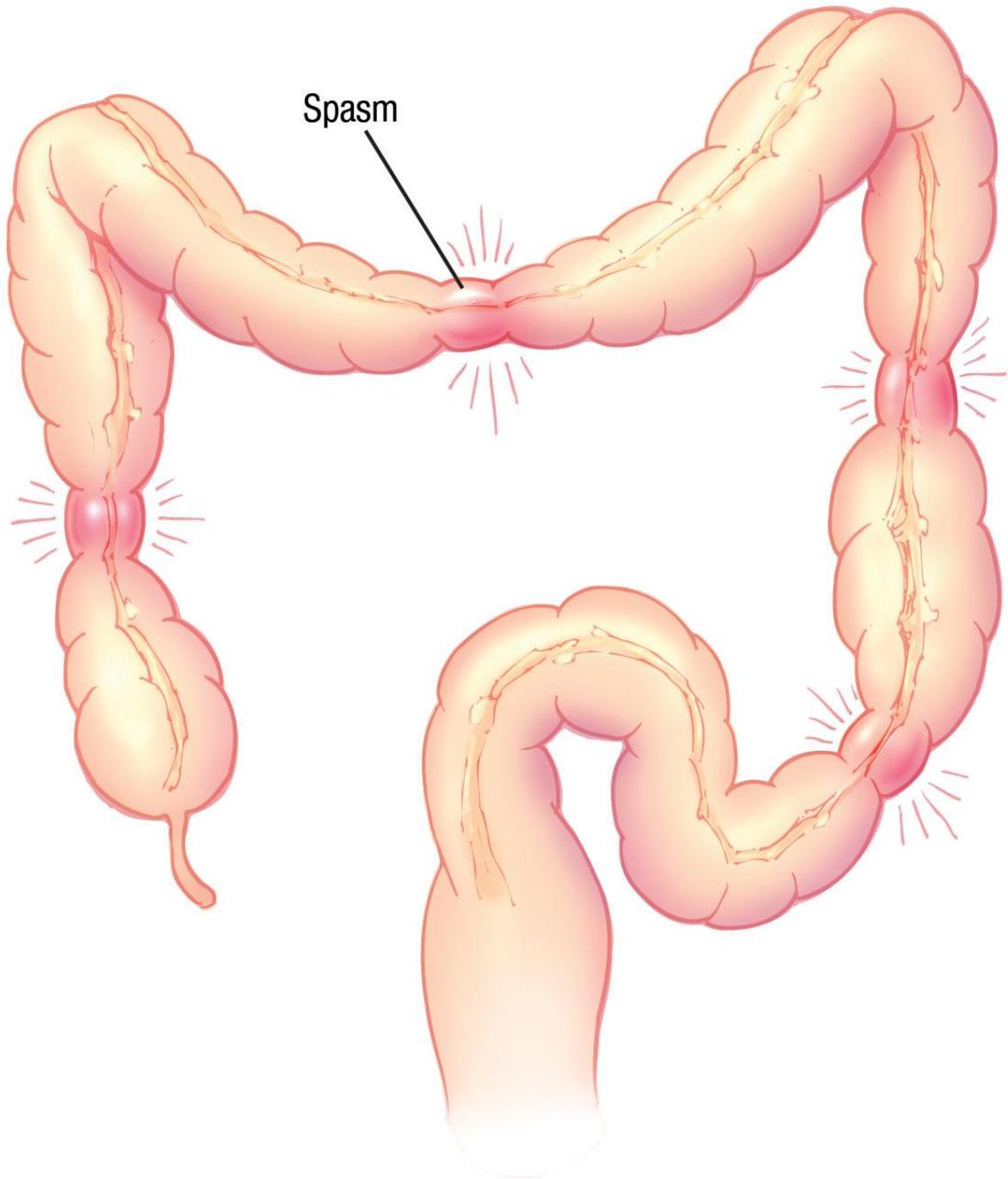
### **What causes the symptoms?**

Most of the symptoms of IBS result from spasms in the intestines or movement of materials too quickly or too slowly through the intestines.

#### ***Spasms***

Layers of muscle line the walls of your intestines. These muscle layers help move food from your stomach through your intestines to your rectum. The muscle contractions produce movement (motility). Normally, the muscles contract and relax in an even rhythm that gently squeezes food through the intestines on a relatively predictable schedule.

However, with IBS, this movement may be abnormal. The intestinal muscles contract for a longer time and with more strength than normal. Spasms can happen in one or more areas in the small or large intestines (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Spasms in the large intestine**

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Spasms cause some of the pain you feel in your abdomen. When you have spasms, the contents of your intestines do not move at normal, predictable rates. Diarrhea happens when the contents are moved through too quickly. Constipation happens when the contents are held in your body so long they become dry and hard.

### ***Increased sensitivity***

Besides the pain from forceful contractions, pain can also be caused by gas that stretches the walls of your intestine. With IBS, the nerve endings in your large intestine may be more sensitive than normal. Something that might not bother most people, such as bubbles of gas, may feel quite painful to you. Therefore, you may feel bloated or gassy and feel an urge to have a bowel movement even when the rectum contains only small amounts of stool or is empty.

### **What causes IBS?**

The cause of IBS is not known. One theory is that abnormal movement and increased sensitivity of the large intestine, especially with certain foods and stress, cause most or all of the symptoms, but no one knows why movement and sensitivity are abnormal. There is ongoing research to discover the cause of IBS.

### **Diagnosis**

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No test exists that specifically tells your health care provider you have IBS. Your health care provider may ask you questions to gather information such as what symptoms you experience, when they happen and how long they last. Next, a physical examination will be performed to exclude other problems that might cause your symptoms. You may have diagnostic procedures such as blood tests, stool tests, X-rays and endoscopy (a procedure using an endoscope, a special viewing instrument to see inside the bowel). Many tests may be used to exclude other diseases; however, usually IBS can be accurately diagnosed based upon the presence of typical symptoms.

### **Treatment**

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IBS is not a life-threatening condition. The most important goal of treatment is to manage your symptoms, minimizing them so you can participate in activities that make your life meaningful and enjoyable.

Learning about IBS is your *first* step. Next, you must learn if any foods, activities and situations make your symptoms worse. Then use this information to develop healthy habits to help manage your symptoms.

These healthy habits include regular physical activity, managing your diet and changing how you handle stressful situations. Management of IBS relies on how you live every day.

If you hope medication alone will remove your digestive problems, you may not have considered fully the importance of healthy habits and behaviors in reducing your symptoms.

As you adopt new daily habits do not expect your body to respond immediately. Instead, look for signs of gradual improvement, perhaps over several months. Do not be discouraged when progress seems slow. Your goal is to find long-term solutions.

The following suggestions about physical activity, nutrition and stress may help you adopt long-term habits to help you manage your symptoms.

### **Exercise on a regular basis**

Besides improving your overall health, exercise provides benefits especially valuable to people with IBS. It helps lessen feelings of stress and it helps create regular contractions of your intestines.

Before you begin an exercise program, discuss it with your health care provider. The best program for you will depend on individual factors such as your age and health. Begin exercising gradually. For example, your health care provider may recommend you exercise for only three minutes for several sessions before you gradually increase to 5, 10, 15 and 20 minutes or more.

For most people, 30 minutes of exercise a day is a reasonable goal. Also, exercise at a speed comfortable for you. If you are short of breath while you exercise and cannot hold a conversation with someone, slow down. If you feel tightness in your chest, see a health care provider right away, or go to an emergency room.

### **Maintain good eating habits**

Promote healthy bowel function and overall good health by doing the following:

- Choose foods according to the recommended amounts in the Food Guide Pyramid.
- Eat regularly scheduled meals.
- Maintain an adequate intake of fiber-rich foods.
- Drink adequate fluids.

Refer to the information in this material for diet and nutritional information.

### ***Stress and IBS***

Worry, anxiety and other mental stress can cause digestive symptoms, such as an upset stomach or diarrhea, in anyone. These types of symptoms happen more often and more severely in people with IBS. Symptoms of pain and changes in bowel movements may cause more stress and make your symptoms worse. A vicious cycle can be established: Symptoms increase your stress, which cause your symptoms to worsen, which further increases your stress, and so forth. In addition, IBS can force you to change your daily routine, decreasing your quality of life and further increasing your stress.

Regular exercise, changes in your diet, and stress management are three ways to help reduce your symptoms. Some people find their attitudes toward themselves, other people, situations or events do not promote exercising regularly, eating well or taking time to relax. If so, a psychologist who specializes in behavioral medicine may provide help in adopting healthy habits and better managing your IBS.

If you have stress, talk to your health care provider about what you can do to help manage it. Ask for patient education material about stress management and about any other available resources that may help you.

### ***Medications***

Your health care provider may recommend one or more of the following medications in addition to your behavioral changes:

- Anti-spasmodic medications relax intestinal muscles and relieve spasms.
- Anti-depressants, even given to people who are not depressed, may decrease the feeling of pain in your abdomen.
- Anti-diarrhea medications slow the speed of food as it moves through the intestines, which also causes less pain.
- Pain-relieving medications help decrease pain, but they must be used carefully.
  - Care is needed with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs because they may irritate your stomach.
  - Narcotics should be avoided.
- Medications to relieve gas and bloating, nausea, and heartburn may help you feel more comfortable.
- Fiber supplements may help manage constipation. They may also help some diarrhea conditions.

### ***Miscellaneous***

Although not each of these suggestions works for each person, one or more of the following might help you manage some of your symptoms:

- Heat — Soak in a warm bath or lie down with a hot water bottle or heating pad on your abdomen to decrease abdominal pain.
- Tobacco — Because of health issues, you should not use tobacco. Discuss tobacco use with your health care provider.
- Clothes — Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes.
- Bowel movements — Respond when you feel an urge to move your bowels. Trying to ignore the feeling may lead to constipation. Avoid excessive straining during bowel movements.
- Sleep — There is evidence to suggest that getting a good night's rest can help decrease the intensity of IBS symptoms.

## **Nutrition and IBS**

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The following dietary guidelines are suitable for most people who have IBS. Your health care providers can help you with specific guidelines to fit your needs.

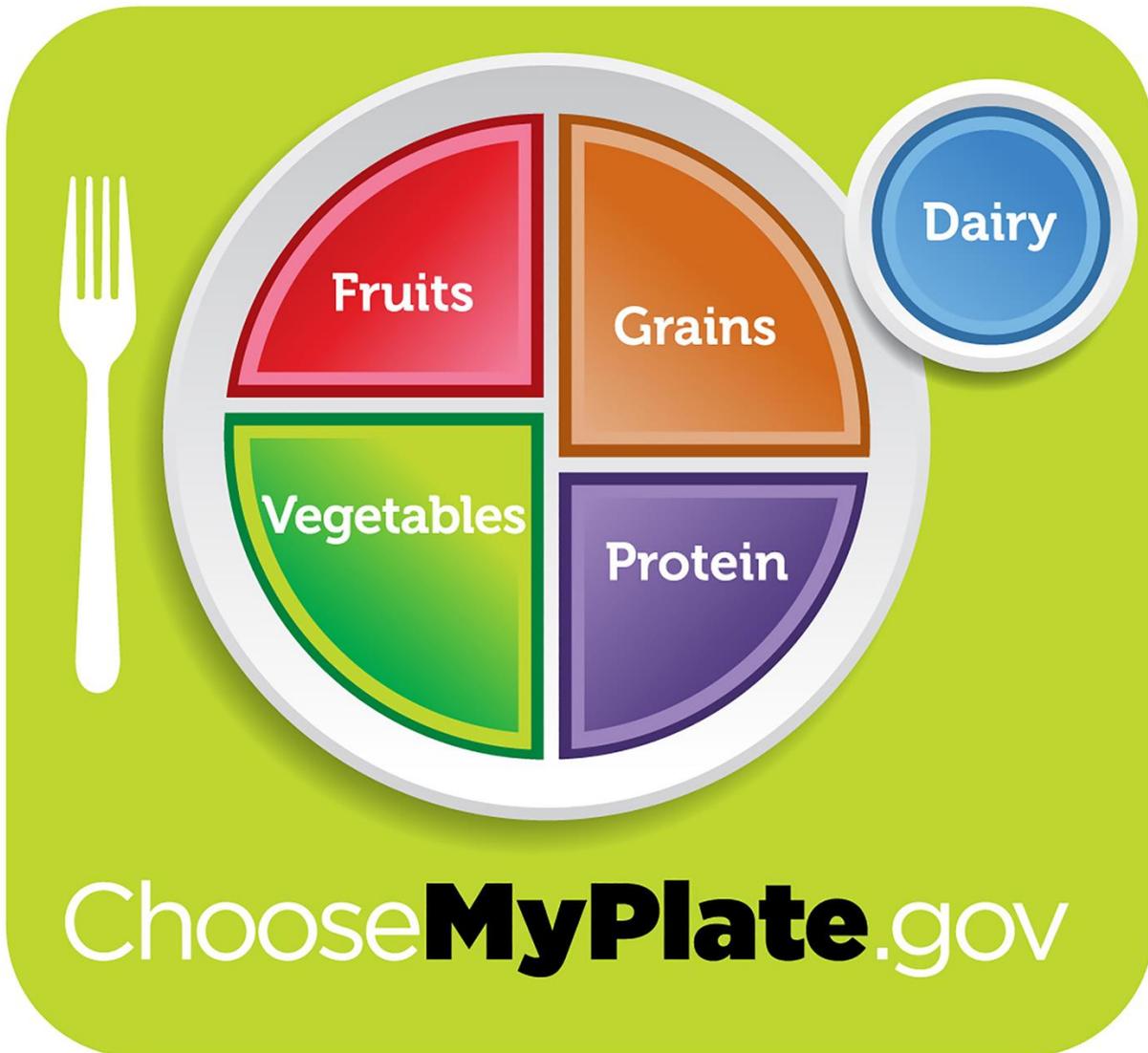
### **General Dietary Guidelines for IBS**

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Follow these general dietary guidelines to help manage your IBS symptoms:

- Eat a healthy diet that is balanced and varied.
- Follow a regular schedule for meals.
- Limit or avoid foods that trigger symptoms.
- Get enough fiber.

Before you eat, think about what and how much food goes on your plate or in your cup or bowl. Over the day, include foods from all food groups: vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein foods. Follow the MyPlate guidelines (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** MyPlate

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Make half your plate fruit and vegetables. Make at least half your grains whole. Switch to skim or 1% milk. Vary your protein food choices.

## Follow a Regular Schedule for Meals

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Skipping meals or eating large amounts of food at one time may cause symptoms of IBS. Eating three meals or three small meals plus snacks each day at regular times may help you:

- Have regular bowel movements.
- Keep from overeating.
- Lessen the desire to eat quickly. Eating too quickly results in swallowing air that may lead to more gas and bloating.
- Balance your diet.
- Fight fatigue.
- Avoid periods of low energy and/or low blood sugar.

## Limit or Avoid Foods That Trigger Symptoms

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Food intolerances (foods you are not able to eat because they cause bothersome symptoms) vary from person to person. Even in the same person, food intolerances can vary from day to day, depending upon stress and other factors such as fatigue, skipping meals or changing your normal routine. Stress alone can make symptoms worse.

As a general guideline, do not eliminate a food from your diet unless it frequently causes problems for you. The following items may cause symptoms in some people:

**High-fat foods** — Fatty or rich foods may cause bloating or diarrhea. Fatty foods also may cause heartburn. Heartburn, also called acid reflux or esophageal reflux, happens when stomach acid backs up into your esophagus. You do not need to avoid all foods with fat – but limit or avoid high-fat foods such as fatty meats, rich sauces, deep fried foods and pastries.

**Lactose** — Lactose, the natural sugar in milk, may cause bloating, gas or diarrhea. Most people can tolerate cheese, yogurt and small amounts of milk. You may want to try reduced-lactose milk (Lactaid™ or Dairy Ease™). If you think you have lactose intolerance, cut back on foods containing lactose to see if your symptoms improve. Talk with your health care provider about being tested for lactose intolerance.

**Fructose** — Fructose is the natural sugar in fruit. Too much fruit juice or foods and beverages sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup may cause bloating, gas or diarrhea. If you think you have fructose intolerance, try cutting back on foods containing fructose to see if your symptoms improve, or talk with your health care provider about being tested for fructose intolerance. Most people can eat 3 to 4 servings of fruit a day without experiencing symptoms.

**Sorbitol/mannitol xylitol, isomalt** — These sugar substitutes, found in sugarless gums and candies, cause gas or diarrhea in some people. Other sugar substitutes, aspartame (NutraSweet™), saccharin (Sweet & Low™) and sucralose (Splenda™) do not have this effect.

**Caffeine** — Most people can tolerate some caffeine, however, excessive amounts can worsen symptoms in many people. Caffeine can stimulate more bowel spasms, cause acid reflux or increase anxiety. Limit caffeine to about 100 milligrams (mg) per day, the amount in:

- 1 cup coffee
- 2 cans cola
- 2 cups tea

**Alcohol** — Although alcohol is not associated with IBS, it may cause heartburn. For general good health, women should drink no more than one drink per day. Men should have no more than two drinks per day. One drink is equal to 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of liquor. Anyone over age 65 should have no more than one drink a day.

## Get Enough Fiber

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Fiber helps prevent constipation, but people with other IBS symptoms, including diarrhea, also may benefit from getting adequate fiber in their diets. Fiber works by adding bulk and by absorbing liquid in your bowel, which softens dry, hard stool and makes it easier to pass. Because it absorbs liquid, fiber also may help make watery stools more solid by adding bulk. The amount of fiber recommended for the general population is 21 to 25 grams per day for women and 30 to 38 grams per day for men. However, the right amount of fiber varies from person to person. You will want to find the amount that helps relieve your IBS symptoms yet doesn't cause unwanted pain or bloating.

When you first start to increase fiber in your diet, begin with small amounts and gradually increase the fiber you eat. Increasing dietary fiber too quickly can cause pain and/or bloating in some people.

If increasing the fiber in your diet consistently makes your symptoms worse, you may find that eating just 15 grams a day may work best for you.

## Estimating Your Fiber Intake

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Use the tool below to get your baseline (usual) fiber intake and add a few grams of fiber at each meal over the course of a few weeks or months. To figure out how much fiber you eat in a typical day, multiply the number of servings you eat in each food group by the fiber content:

Food group	Servings	Fiber (Grams)
Vegetables	_____	x 2 grams per serving = _____
<i>(Serving size: 1 cup raw, ½ cup cooked vegetables)</i>		
Fruits	_____	x 2 grams per serving = _____

Food group	Servings	Fiber (Grams)
<i>(Serving size: 1 whole fruit, ½ cup berries, 1 cup cut-up fruit or ____ cup dried fruit)</i>		
<b>Dried beans, lentils, split peas</b>	_____	<b>x 6 grams per serving =</b> _____
<i>(Serving size: ½ cup cooked)</i>		
<b>Nuts, seeds</b>	_____	<b>x 2 grams per serving =</b> _____
<i>(Serving size: ¼ cup, 2 tablespoons peanut butter)</i>		
<b>Whole-grain products</b>	_____	<b>x 2 grams per serving =</b> _____
<i>(Serving size: 1 slice whole-wheat bread, ½ cup whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, other cooked whole grains; 1 whole-grain muffin, 2 cups popcorn)</i>		
<b>Refined grain products</b>	_____	<b>x 1 gram per serving =</b> _____
<i>(Serving size: 1 slice white bread, ½ cup white pasta, white rice, or other processed grain; 1 bagel or muffin)</i>		
<b>Breakfast cereals</b>	_____	<b>x ____ grams per serving =</b> _____
<i>(Check labels for the dietary fiber content)</i>		
		<b>Total Fiber Intake</b>
		<b>=</b> _____

Use this as a baseline and add more fiber gradually over several weeks. Your health care provider may suggest that you use a fiber supplement, such as Citrucel™ or Fibercon™ in addition to the fiber you get from the foods you eat.

These suggestions may help as you increase the fiber in your diet:

- Eat a variety of fiber-rich foods: vegetables and fruit, whole-wheat bread, whole-grain cereal. See oatmeal label below.
- Include a fiber-rich food at each meal.
- Check dietary fiber content on food labels. Choose foods with two or more grams of fiber per serving.
- If gas is a problem, choose fiber-rich foods less likely to produce gas.
- Increase the amount of fluids you drink each day.

# Oatmeal

## Nutrition Facts

30 servings per container

**Serving Size** 1/2 cup (40g)

Amount per serving

**Calories** 150

**% Daily Value\***

**Total Fat** 3g 5%

Saturated Fat 0.5g 3%

*Trans* Fat 0g

**Cholesterol** 0mg 0%

**Sodium** 0mg 0%

**Total Carbohydrate** 27g 9%

Dietary Fiber 4g 16%

Total Sugars 1g

**Protein** 5g

Vitamin D 0%

Calcium 0%

Iron 10%

Potassium 0mg 0%

\*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

**INGREDIENTS:** 100% NATURAL WHOLE GRAIN ROLLED OATS

**Figure 3**

## Fiber Content of Foods

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The following list shows the dietary fiber content of foods that are good sources of fiber. This list does not include all possible choices. Read food labels to identify other high-fiber foods.

### **Two to three grams of fiber per serving**

#### ***Grain products***

One serving of grain is ½ cup or 1 average piece, unless other serving size information is given.

Barley, cooked  
Bran muffin (2 inch)  
Bread or roll, 100 percent whole wheat  
Cheerios™ (1 cup)  
Crisp bread, whole grain (Ry-Krisp™, others) (2 pieces)  
Flax, ground (1 tablespoon)  
Granola  
Grape-Nuts Flakes™ (1 cup)  
Muesli  
Oat bran cereal, cooked  
Oatmeal, cooked  
Popcorn, popped (2-3 cups)  
Rice, brown  
Wheat bran (2 tablespoons)  
Hot wheat cereal (Ralston™, Maltex™, Wheatena™)  
Wheat flakes (Wheaties™, Total™) (1 cup)  
Wheat germ (2 tablespoons)  
Whole-wheat pasta, cooked

#### ***Vegetables and fruits***

One serving of a vegetable or fruit is ½ cup cooked or canned, 1 cup raw or 1 average piece, unless other serving size information is given.

Broccoli  
Brussels sprouts  
Carrots  
Cauliflower  
Corn  
Cucumber (1 large)  
Green beans  
Greens  
Parsnips  
Peapods  
Potato  
Pumpkin  
Sauerkraut  
Spinach  
Squash, winter (butternut, buttercup)

Sweet potato  
Tomato (1 large)  
Tomato sauce, paste or puree  
Wax beans

Apple  
Apricots, fresh (4-5) or canned  
Banana  
Blueberries  
Dried fruit (prunes, dates, others) (¼ cup)  
Figs, canned  
Figs, fresh or dried (2)  
Kiwi  
Mango  
Nectarine  
Orange  
Papaya  
Peach, fresh  
Pears, canned  
Plums, fresh (2)  
Rhubarb, cooked  
Strawberries  
Tangerines (2)

***Nuts and seeds***

*Serving size is ¼ cup unless another serving size is given.*

Nuts  
Peanut butter (2 tablespoons)  
Roasted soybeans (soy nuts)  
Sunflower seed kernels  
Pumpkin or squash seeds, roasted

**Four to six grams of fiber per serving**

***Grain products***

Bulgur, cooked (½ cup)  
Grape-Nuts™ (½ cup)  
Oat Squares™ (1 cup)  
Shredded wheat (1 cup bite-size or 2 large biscuits)

***Vegetables and fruits***

One serving of a vegetable or fruit is ½ cup cooked or canned, 1 cup raw or 1 average size piece, unless other serving size information is given.

Artichokes  
Avocado  
Baked beans  
Peas, green

Plantain, 1 medium  
Soup, lentil or pea (1 cup)  
Soybeans  
Vegetable protein crumbles  
Vegetable protein burger (1)

Blackberries  
Pear, fresh  
Prunes, stewed  
Raspberries

## **Over 6 grams of fiber per serving**

### ***Grain products***

Bran cereals (Kashi Go Lean™, Kashi Go Crunch™, All-Bran™, Fiber One™, 100% Bran™, Bran Buds™) (½ cup)  
Bran flakes (1 cup)  
Chex™, wheat or multibran (1 cup)  
Corn Bran™ (1 cup)  
Raisin bran (1 cup)

### ***Vegetables***

Dried beans (navy, pinto, kidney, lima, soy beans), cooked or canned  
Lentils, cooked  
Dried peas, cooked (split peas, black-eyed)

Other fruits, vegetables and whole-grain products not listed here have about 1 to 2 grams of fiber per serving. These items will add fiber to your diet if you eat them often enough and in large enough quantities.

## **Drink plenty of fluids**

Drinking eight or more 8-ounce glasses of fluid each day may help soften your stools and relieve constipation or replace fluid lost from diarrhea. Fluids can include other liquids besides water. Keep in mind that carbonated beverages may cause bloating or heartburn, and too much fruit juice may cause gas or diarrhea.

## **Gas**

Everyone's body produces and needs to pass gas. What is normal varies widely from person to person. Some people think that passing any amount of gas is too much. However, sometimes gas formation can result in discomfort and passing it may not always be within your control. If gas is bothersome to you, the following information may help.

### ***Sources of gas***

Gas comes from two sources, swallowed air and the incomplete digestion of certain foods.

The following behaviors may cause you to swallow air:

- Eating or drinking rapidly
- Chewing gum
- Drinking through a straw
- Drinking carbonated beverages
- Wearing poor-fitting dentures
- Smoking

The following forms of sugar in foods may cause gas because certain carbohydrates in the foods do not completely break down during digestion. When these are not completely digested, bacteria from the undigested food in your intestines produce gas.

- Raffinose (found in baked beans)
- Fructose
- Lactose
- Sorbitol, mannitol xylitol, isomalt

Other foods that may cause gas in some people include:

- Apples, apple juice
- Bananas
- Bran
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage, sauerkraut
- Cauliflower
- Dried beans
- Lentils
- Lima beans
- Onions
- Prunes, prune juice
- Raisins

To improve your tolerance for these foods, try the following:

- Eat these foods in small amounts ( $\frac{1}{2}$  portion)
- Try various preparation methods (cooked versus raw)
- Eat these foods in different forms (yogurt versus milk)

The following foods are fiber-rich but are less likely to produce gas:

***Fruits***

Apricots

Berries

Kiwi

Mango

Nectarines  
Oranges, fresh  
Papaya  
Peaches, fresh  
Plums, fresh  
Tangerine, fresh

***Vegetables***

Artichokes  
Avocado  
Beans, green or wax  
Carrots  
Corn  
Greens  
Okra  
Peas, green  
Potato  
Sweet potato  
Pumpkin  
Spinach  
Tomatoes  
Winter squash

***Grain Products***

Barley  
Bread, whole wheat  
Cereals, whole grain, such as:  
Cheerios™  
Flax  
Granola  
Grapenuts™, GrapeNuts Flakes™  
Maltex™  
Mini-Wheats™  
Muesli  
Nutri Grain™  
Oatmeal, Oat bran  
Oat Squares™  
Ralston™  
Shredded wheat  
Total™  
Wheat bran  
Wheat Chex™  
Wheat germ  
Wheatena™  
Wheaties™

Flat breads and crisp breads, whole grain, such as Kavli™ and Wasa™

Pasta, whole wheat  
Popcorn  
Rice, brown or wild

### ***Nuts***

Peanut butter  
Sunflower seeds and other snack seeds

The following factors may also contribute to bloating or gas:

- Rapid increase in amount of fiber eaten
- Eating fatty foods
- Stress
- Constipation

### **Tips to reduce gas and bloating:**

- Limit eating gas-forming foods
- Eat and drink slowly
- Increase fiber gradually over a period of weeks
- Limit fatty foods
- Exercise regularly
- Manage stress (Ask your health care provider for more information about how to manage stress.)

## Food Safety

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### **Infection prevention**

*The following information is general information and not specific for people with IBS.*

If food is not properly handled and prepared, bacteria in the food can make you sick. Follow these food safety guidelines to help protect against illnesses:

- Before you prepare or eat food, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water and dry them using a clean towel. If water is not available and your hands are not visibly dirty, you can use a waterless, alcohol-based sanitizer to clean your hands.
- Keep your food preparation area clean, washing surfaces with hot, soapy water. Rinse surfaces well to remove soap residue.
- Rinse and scrub fresh fruits and vegetables under running water before cutting or eating them.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, fish and eggs away from ready-to-eat foods when shopping or during meal preparation. Use separate cutting boards, utensils and platters.
- Thaw meat in the refrigerator. Store meat that is thawing below other foods so drips from the meat do not contaminate other food.

- Do not leave hot or cold foods at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
- Cook your food long enough and at a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria. Use a meat thermometer to ensure food safety. Push the end of the meat thermometer into the thickest part of the food and make sure the temperature reaches the levels listed on the chart below before you stop cooking the food.

Food	Food must reach this temperature
Ground meats, chops, roasts and egg dishes	160 degrees Fahrenheit
Ground poultry, casseroles, leftovers and stuffing	165 degrees Fahrenheit
Poultry (chicken and turkey breast meat)	170 degrees Fahrenheit
Whole birds, legs, thighs and wings	180 degrees Fahrenheit

## Your Future

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You have begun to learn about IBS, including what might be causing your symptoms and how you might live a healthier life. Continue learning so you can adopt healthy habits that work for you — habits that reduce your symptoms and allow you to live the lifestyle you prefer.

*Some questions that concern people who have IBS include:*

### 1. Are there any foods that help control diarrhea?

Not really. Some individuals have identified “safe” foods they can turn to when they have bouts of diarrhea. These foods are very individual. If you have identified foods that “trigger” or worsen your diarrhea, avoiding them should help improve your diarrhea.

### 2. Colon Cleansers: Are they safe?

Colon cleansers are not necessary; they may even cause harm. Washing out the intestinal tract could potentially interrupt absorption, leading to a vitamin or mineral deficiency. Frequent use of some types of laxatives can have a boomerang effect, so that cleaning your colon could leave it less able to do its job the way nature intended. They can also lead to dehydration or cause internal damage.

A healthy diet that includes enough fiber and water is nature’s way of cleansing the colon. Exercise is also important for increasing blood flow to help the colon work efficiently. Bottom line: Your colon knows its job.

### 3. I have osteoporosis, how will I get calcium if I stop drinking milk?

Some people with lactose intolerance can tolerate other dairy products, such as cheese and yogurt. If you are unable to meet your calcium requirements by dietary means, use a calcium supplement.

**4. I tried taking a calcium supplement but it made my constipation worse. Are there any supplements that**

**are less constipating?**

Calcium carbonate (TUMS™, Caltrate™, Os-Cal™) supplements tend to be more constipating. Calcium citrate (such as Citracal™) supplements tend to be less constipating.

**5. Should I take probiotics for IBS?**

Probiotics are dietary supplements containing live, “good” bacteria. Probiotics may be useful in IBS. Studies are ongoing but they have been shown to reduce symptoms of bloating and may help with other symptoms. There is research that has shown that lactobacillus and bifidobacterium may be helpful in those patients who suffer from significant abdominal bloating. Be sure to discuss the probiotics with your health care provider before trying them.

**6. Should fiber supplements be taken at bedtime or in the morning?**

Usually at bedtime in the hopes you may sleep through the bloating that some patients sometimes experience with fiber supplements.

## Contacting Your Health Care Provider

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If these suggestions do not help you manage your IBS symptoms or if you have questions about your condition or this information, please talk with your health care provider.

This material is for your education and information only. This content does not replace medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. New medical research may change this information. If you have questions about a medical condition, always talk with your health care provider.

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