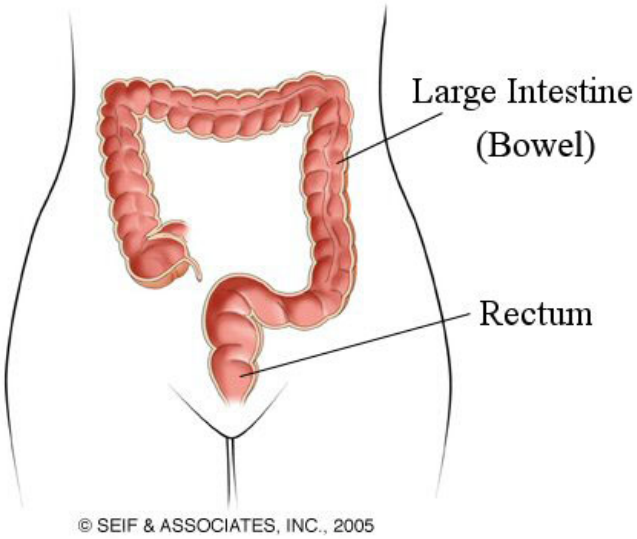
Diet & IBS
(Irritable Bowel Syndrome)

No cure has been found for IBS. Many options are available to treat the symptoms. Your caregivers will give you the best treatments available for your symptoms. They will also encourage you to manage stress and make changes to your diet. You need to work with your doctor and Registered Dietician to find the best combination of medicine, diet, counseling, and support to control your symptoms. The following are some diet suggestions.



SOME FOOD MAKE IBS WORSE

These foods are:

- Fatty foods like french fries.
- Milk products like cheese or ice cream.
- Chocolate.
- Alcohol.
- Caffeine (found in coffee and some sodas).
- Carbonated drinks like soda.

If certain foods cause symptoms, you should eat less of them or stop eating them.

CAREFUL EATING REDUCES IBS SYMPTOMS.

- Before changing your diet, keep a journal of the foods that seem to cause distress. Then discuss your findings with your caregivers. Write down this information:
  - What you are eating during the day and when.
  - What problems are you having after eating?
  - When do the symptoms occur in relation to your meals?
  - What foods always make you feel badly?
- Take your notes with you to the caregiver to see if you should stop eating certain foods.

SOME FOODS MAKE IBS BETTER.

Fiber reduces IBS symptoms, especially constipation, because it makes stools soft, bulky, and easier to pass. Fiber is found in bran, bread, cereal, beans, fruit, and vegetables.

Some examples of foods with fiber:

- **Fruits.**
  - Apples.
  - Peaches.
  - Pears.
  - Berries.
  - Figs.
- **Vegetables.**
  - Broccoli, raw.
  - Cabbage.
  - Carrots.
  - Raw peas.
- **Breads, cereals, and beans.**
  - Kidney beans.
  - Lima beans.
  - Whole-grain bread.
  - Whole-grain cereal.
- Add foods with fiber to your diet a little at a time. This will let your body get used to them. Too much fiber

at once might cause gas and swelling of your belly *(abdomen*). This can trigger symptoms in a person with IBS.

- Caregivers usually recommend a diet with enough fiber to produce soft, painless bowel movements. High-fiber diets may cause gas and bloating. These symptoms often go away within a few weeks as your body adjusts. In many cases, dietary fiber may lessen IBS symptoms, particularly constipation. However, it may not help pain or diarrhea. High-fiber diets keep the colon mildly *distended* (enlarged with the added fiber). This may help prevent spasms in the colon. Some forms of fiber also keep water in the stool, thereby preventing hard stools that are difficult to pass.
- Besides telling you to eat more foods with fiber, your caregiver may also tell you to get more fiber by taking a fiber pill or drinking water mixed with a special high-fiber powder. An example of this is a natural fiber laxative containing psyllium seed.

HOW MUCH YOU EAT IS IMPORTANT:

- Large meals can cause cramping and diarrhea in people with IBS.
  - If this happens to you, try eating 4 or 5 small meals a day.
  - Or, have your usual 3 meals, but eat less at each meal.
  - It may also help if your meals are low in fat and high in carbohydrates. Examples of carbohydrates are pasta, rice, whole-grain breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables.
- If dairy products cause your symptoms to flare up, you can try eating less of those foods.
  - You might be able to handle yogurt better than other dairy products because it contains bacteria that helps with digestion.
  - Dairy products are an important source of calcium and other nutrients. If you need to avoid dairy products, be sure to talk with a Registered Dietitian about getting these nutrients through other food sources.
- Drinking 6 to 8 glasses of plain water a day is important, especially if you have diarrhea.

*You may want to consult a Registered Dietitian who can help you make changes to your diet.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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