

Taming her Tummy Troubles



by Kate Scarlata, RD, LDN

I've always had a sensitive stomach, but the turning point came when my abdominal pain and bloating were so bad I had to leave a friend's party to go home and lie down. I decided right then that I needed some help. I quickly realized I wasn't alone. Suffering in silence with pain, bloating and altered elimination habits is very common.

In fact, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is estimated to affect one in five adults and is more prevalent in women. It is defined as a disorder that occurs in the digestive tract when muscles and nerves don't function normally. Symptoms include cramping, abdominal pain, gas, bloating, constipation, elimination habit changes and a sense of incomplete bowel movement.

Taking myself to the doctor was the first step to a long journey for my resultant IBS diagnosis and me. After multiple CAT scans, gastroenterology appointments and a colonoscopy (sounds fun, huh?), I was left with an IBS diagnosis and very limited advice on how to deal with this condition. Despite eating what I perceived as healthy (I am a registered dietitian!) I continued to feel poorly. Since I am not one to sit idle and accept the status quo, I started researching all the latest treatments for IBS. And lo and behold, I found some studies that involved modifying specific dietary carbohydrates, termed as FODMAPs, to manage the bloating and pain. And this dietary approach made all the difference in the world.

FODMAPs are a group of carbohydrates (sugars) that are often malabsorbed and fermented by the bacteria that normally resides in the intestine. The fermentation of these sugars can lead to the gas and pain associated with IBS. Research shows that minimizing these carbohydrates, which includes lactose (milk sugar); excess fructose (fruit sugar); fructans (chains of fructose found in wheat and onions); galactans (chains of another simple sugar, galactose,

found in beans); and polyols (sugar alcohols) can alleviate symptoms in 85 percent of those with IBS. Simple diet modifications to minimize FODMAPs are shown in the following table:

Choose this:	Not this:
Dairy: Lactaid milk; cheddar, Swiss, mozzarella, brie, camembert and parmesan cheese	Milk, ice cream, cottage and ricotta cheeses, custard
Fruit: Ripe banana, grapefruit, grapes, honeydew, lemons, limes, passion fruit, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos	Apples, apricots, blackberries, cherries, mangos, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, prunes, watermelon, coconut cream/milk
Vegetables: Bok choy, bean sprouts, bell peppers, butter lettuce, carrots, celery, chives, corn, eggplant, green beans, tomatoes, potatoes, spinach	Artichokes, asparagus, Brussel sprouts, broccoli, beetroot, cabbage, chicory, garlic, leeks, okra, onions, radicchio, shallots, snow peas
Beans: Very small quantities	Limit chickpeas, lentils, kidney beans, soy products
Sweeteners: sugar, aspartame (Equal), maple syrup	Agave, honey, sugar alcohols found in sugar-free products such as sorbitol, mannitol, maltitol, xylitol, excess high fructose corn syrup

The FODMAPs approach is gaining momentum in the IBS community as a possible dietary intervention to help many with IBS feel like themselves again and start living the life they were meant to enjoy. For more on the FODMAPs approach and diet for IBS, check out my newly published book, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Eating Well with IBS*, Alpha 2010. Being a foodie and a registered dietitian with IBS, I included 165 remarkably delicious recipes, most of which are FODMAPs modified to keep your tummy tame and your palate very happy! Learn more by following me on Twitter @beegood or by visiting www.katescarlata.com.

Your Guide to IBS

By Ashleigh Eisbrener

About IBS

Although your symptoms may worsen or improve from day to day, IBS does not advance over time or cause permanent colon damage, like other more serious colon conditions. If you have persistent changes in bowel habits or other signs and symptoms of IBS, visit your doctor who can rule out the other conditions and help you find symptom relief.

Causes

The cause of IBS is unknown. Normally, the intestinal walls are lined with muscle layers that contract and retract as food moves from the stomach through the intestines. For IBS sufferers, contractions may last longer, causing food to travel through the intestines quicker, leading to gas, bloating and diarrhea. In other cases, the opposite occurs, where food passes slower and stools become hard and dry, leading to constipation.

Triggers

For unknown reasons, certain foods, medications and emotions can trigger symptoms. Some find they worsen with food and drinks, like chocolate, select fruits and vegetables, milk, alcohol and carbonated beverages. Others find their symptoms increase during stressful times, hormonal changes or with other illnesses.

Tests and Diagnosis

A diagnosis is often done by the process of elimination. Doctors have developed a select list of signs and symptoms a person must have to be diagnosed with IBS. Examples include abdominal pain lasting at least 12 weeks, changes in stool frequency or consistency,

mucus in your stool and/or bloating.

Treatment

Since it's unclear what causes IBS, treatment involves symptom relief. In mild cases, this includes diet and lifestyle changes and stress management. Depending on symptoms, the doctor may also suggest fiber supplements, anti-diarrheal medications, eliminating high-gas foods, anti-cholinergic medications or antibiotics. Two medications currently approved for some cases of IBS include Alosetron, designed to relax the colon and slow the movement of waste, and Lubiprostone, which works by increasing fluid secretion in your small intestine to help with stool passing.

Alternative Medicine

These nontraditional therapies may help relieve symptoms of IBS: acupuncture, herbs, probiotics and meditation.



Pumpkin Soup

- 2 (14.5) oz. Cans pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling)
- 3 1/2 cups lactose free milk
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 1 tsp. Ground Ginger
- 1 tsp. Ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. Salt

In large saucepan set over medium heat, combine pumpkin, milk, maple syrup, ginger, cinnamon and salt. stir for 5 minutes to blend.

Reduce heat to low, and allow soup to simmer for 15 minutes to infuse flavors. Enjoy!