

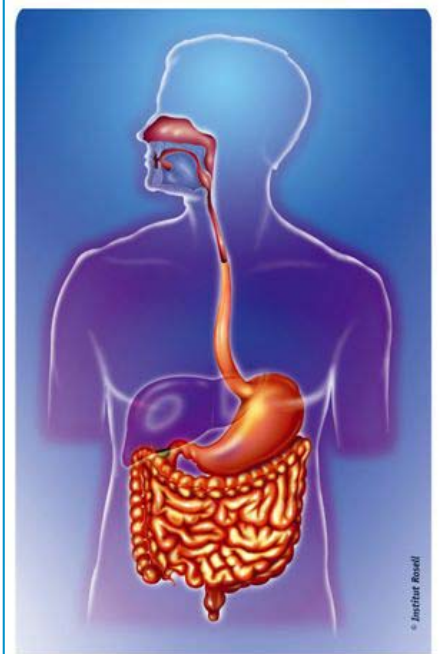
Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Gastrointestinal dysfunction is common; it is linked to imbalances in gut bacteria, stress, low fibre diets, high caffeine intake and food intolerance. It is estimated that 10-20% of the UK population is affected by the chronic digestive complaint known as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). This condition is more common among women and normally develops between the ages of 20 and 30. While there is no cure for IBS, the symptoms can be controlled.

IBS and The Gut-Brain Axis

Although the exact cause of IBS is undetermined it's manifestations are generally related to over activity of the nerves and muscles of the gut. The gut contains millions of neurons and a greater quantity of the "feel good" neurotransmitter serotonin than any other part of the body. Distension of the gut triggers nerve fibres lining the gut to transmit signals to centres in the brain that register pain; in IBS sufferers' pain seems to be perceived at lower levels of distension. This "gut brain" interaction helps to explain why IBS is particularly associated with psychological factors and why stress seems to trigger flare ups.

IBS is commonly treated through a combination of anti-spasmodic medicines, laxatives for constipation and antimotility medicines (Immodium) for diarrhoea. Such treatments do not provide a solution to IBS, nutrition based strategies provide a constructive, alternative approach to symptom management.



The Role Of Probiotics

There are several trillion "friendly" bacteria (comprising over 400 species) in the human gastrointestinal tract; these types of bacteria dominate in a healthy gut. "Friendly" bacteria, called probiotics, reinforce the integrity of the intestinal lining as a protective barrier to prevent harmful organisms or materials from crossing into the body's bloodstream. Some probiotics have been found to secrete antimicrobial substances known as "bacteriocins," which inhibit harmful bacteria. By supporting the production of short chain fatty acids (SCFAs), which are by products of the fermentation of fibre by bacteria, and thus lowering the pH of the gut, friendly bacteria create an unfavourable environment for pathogenic organisms. Recent research indicates that the use of probiotic supplements can help patients control the symptoms of IBS.

Probiotics should not be confused with prebiotics, these enhance the growth of probiotic bacteria, they include bananas, garlic and onions.

Information created by Quest Vitamin's Nutritionist.

Questions and Comments please email us; nutritionists@questvitamins.co.uk

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IBS - Irritable Bowel Syndrome

• • • Your 'at a glance' guide to staying healthy for life By Quest Vitamins • • •

Lactobacillus Plantarum

L. Plantarum is a specific strain of probiotic found in the human gut. It is present in many fermented food products including some cheeses, sauerkraut, pickles, brined olives and sourdough. High quality research trails have investigated the effect of supplementation with *L. Plantarum* on gastrointestinal function with remarkable results.

Other nutritional aids

Peppermint oil has naturally antispasmodic properties; enteric-coated peppermint oil after meals is recommended.

Life-style tips

Eat a diet based on whole-grains, fresh fruit and vegetables and high quality protein; consume caffeine and alcohol in moderation. IBS patients should avoid artificial sweeteners. Many sufferers find that spicy food triggers symptoms.

It is often recommended that IBS patients reduce their intake of insoluble fibre (found in grains such as wheat and rye) while increasing intake of soluble fibre (found in oats, barley, legumes and vegetables); the benefits of this vary with the individual and for long term gut health a balance of both fibre types should be consumed.

Many people experiencing IBS may benefit from an elimination diet; this involves removing foods you eat regularly for a period of 7-10 days. If symptoms significantly improve food intolerance may be causing the problem, if this is the case then only after about two months should foods gradually be re-introduced. Do not permanently cut out food groups without professional advice. In some cases the underlying cause of IBS is insufficient production of the enzyme lactase, needed to digest the sugar, lactose, found in milk and other dairy products; this can be verified by a GP and managed by eating dairy alternatives such as soy milk or taking a lactase supplement with meals containing dairy.

Regular exercise can improve symptoms, particularly constipation; a brisk 30 minute walk most days of the week is sufficient.

Key Nutrients For IBS

- ✓ Lactobacillus Plantarum
- ✓ Peppermint oil

**A combination of key probiotic supplements,
a balanced diet and stress management
can help to ensure healthy gastrointestinal function.**

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