

Irritable Bowels

We all experience a period of having irritable bowels – when you know your bowels are just not happy. Although you may experience the same symptom(s), it is different from having Irritable bowel syndrome. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a chronic disorder, which causes the bowel or gut to be over sensitive. Symptoms vary and include diarrhoea, constipation, bloatedness, lethargy, headaches, abdominal discomfort. If you are suffering from only diarrhoea, it is unlikely that you have IBS. IBS sufferers usually suffer from all of the above mentioned symptoms.

Nobody really knows what causes IBS. Sometimes the colon is seen to be in a state of unusual activity, contracting and relaxing in an abnormally rapid way, hence the pain and discomfort. This is also the reason why so many sufferers can hear bowel noises – loud rumblings and squeaking, it is caused by gases being propelled through the intestines by peristalsis (muscle contractions). In IBS the colon begins to spasm after only mild stimulation and is more sensitive than usual. It is also well known that IBS could be a mind-body disease, meaning that symptoms may be worse when under psychological stress or even when the body is physically stressed, e.g. by an infection or exhaustion.

There are a number of treatments and approaches; it is usually a case of experimentation to find what suits that particular individual. Although IBS deserves medical attention, it is always best to self investigate the possible dietary causes or contributors to common digestive disorders such as diarrhoea. Improving the diet and aiming to follow the basic guidelines of healthy eating, is often enough to cure an irritable bowel. A poor and unhealthy diet is often the immediate cause of an irritable bowel.

- **Eat regular meals:** Avoid erratic eating patterns, including snacking on junk food, avoid-indulging; avoid rich, fatty or spicy meals
- **Drink plenty:** Aim to drink at least eight glasses a day, include, mineral water, diluted fruit juice, herb or fruit teas. Avoid having huge quantities of ordinary caffeine based drinks, fizzy drinks and alcohol.
- **Focus on your fibre intake:** Fibre moves through the gut undigested. In the colon the fibre ferments and the byproducts of the fermentation is a food source to the lining of the gut, it also helps to keep the natural good bacteria (micro flora) in balance, which ensures to keep the gut healthy. A poor diet, low in fibre means starving the gut. Altering the amount and or type of fibre you eat may help; if your diet is low in fibre you might need more fibre. Most of us have a diet lacking in fibre. Unfortunately snack-type foods are mostly low in fibre.
- **Eat a balanced diet,** which means eating a wide variety of food from all the food Groups.

If you have made changes to your diet and the diarrhoea persists, contact your GP.