



# Irritable bowel syndrome

No condition has undergone more name changes over the past 90 years than irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS. It's referred to as 'spastic colon', 'functional bowel disorder', 'dyspeptic diarrhoea', 'gut hyperreactivity', 'spastic constipation', 'anxiety and GI syndrome', 'mucous colitis' and 'functional bowel syndrome'.

The symptoms generally include bloating and discomfort (particularly after food), bowel rumblings, mucus in stools, constipation alternating with diarrhoea, decreased memory and concentration, fatigue or lethargy and poor-quality sleep. IBS needs to be distinguished from conditions that mimic it, such as colorectal cancer, coeliac disease, infective diarrhoea, diverticular disease, carcinoid syndrome, gallstones, appendicitis and inflammatory bowel disease.

## Can diet help?

The 'Stone-Age' or 'elemental' diet (Chaitow L, Chaitow A. *Stone Age Diet*. London: Macdonald Optima, 1987), which is free of grains, red meat, cow's milk products, refined sugars and all processed foods, can dramatically 'cure' this and related illnesses (*Aliment Pharmacol Ther*, 1997; 11: 735-40).

## What nutritional supplementation should I try?

Ginger can gently reduce colicky spasms, flatulence, nausea and diarrhoea (*Lancet*, 1982; i: 655-7). Rosemary, peppermint and balm can calm intestinal spasm and reduce flatulence (*Planta Med*, 1980; 40: 303-19), as can caraway seed, fennel and probably dill (*Weisz RF. Herbal Medicine*. Gothenburg: Ab Arcanum, 1988: 67-8). Globe artichoke and dandelion aid liver detox and the gallbladder spasms that may accompany IBS (*Wien med Wochenschr*, 1973; 1223: 601; *Wien med Wochenschr*, 1972; 122: 188; *Weisz RF. Herbal Medicine*. Gothenburg: Ab Arcanum, 1988: 94, 96).

IBS sufferers who are too busy to do anything else should at least drink artichoke or dandelion juice every day.

## What tests should I have done?

- ◆ **The Gut Fermentation Profile** is a blood test that measures intestinal yeast overgrowth and gut bacterial imbalances (*J Nutr Med*, 1990; 1: 33-8).
- ◆ **The Gut Permeability Probe** detects a 'leaky gut' (*J R Soc Med*, 1995; 88: 63-6) using a drink called PEG 400. You can have the test done at Biolab Medical Unit in London (tel: 020 7636 5959/5905).

- ◆ **The Breath Hydrogen Test** assesses gut function. If bacterial activity is taking place in the stomach, an increase of hydrogen as a byproduct is detected in a matter of minutes. This can also help to detect *Helicobacter pylori* (a bacterial infection associated with stomach ulcers).
- ◆ **The Candida Antibody Test** establishes whether you are hypersensitive to *Candida albicans*, but not whether you have an overgrowth of this yeast (Kroger GF. *Chronic candidiasis and allergy*, in Brostoff J, Challacombe SJ, eds. *Food Allergy and Intolerance*. Philadelphia, PA: WB Saunders, 1987: 850-72). And don't rely on stool cultures to definitively exclude a *Candida* diagnosis (Pizzorno KJE Jr, Murray MT. *Textbook of Natural Medicine*. Kenmore, WA: Bastyr University, 1995), although they may be useful for investigating the presence of parasites (see also WDDTY's *The Candida and ME Handbook*).

## How did I get it?

Two common predisposing conditions are:

- ◆ a reduced stomach-acid production
- ◆ too few pancreatic enzymes (*J Nutr Environ Med*, 2002; 12: 107-12). These digestive secretions, along with hydrochloric acid and bile, halt *Candida* growth and prevent it from entering the small intestine. Pancreatic enzymes also keep the small intestine free of parasites (*Gastroenterology*, 1985; 88: 927-32) and help to break down immune complexes (*Arthritis Rheum*, 1986; 8: 16-9).

## How are these detected?

I use clinical observation: low stomach-acid production can cause nausea, excessive burping, uncomfortable pressure in the pit of the stomach, hyperventilation and/or, occasionally, oesophageal reflux. People who don't produce enough pancreatic enzymes and/or stomach acid often suffer from panic attacks. This is because the stomach releases its contents into the small intestine only when a particular level of acidity is reached. With too little stomach acid, the stomach expands as fluids and foods enter, but cannot leave, causing the distended stomach to press against the nearby cardiovascular system, producing palpitations and panic attacks.

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## What's a successful treatment?

- ◆ **Stop antibiotics, steroids, immunosuppressant drugs and the Pill** (unless there is an absolute medical necessity)
  - ◆ **Follow the 'gut dysbiosis and fermentation diet'**, which supports treatment (downloadable from my website)
  - ◆ **Supplement with pancreatic enzymes, hydrochloric acid and pepsin**, and substances that promote bile flow
  - ◆ **Support liver function** (which has to constantly detoxify alcohols produced within the body)
  - ◆ **Support immune function** (which has probably been compromised)
  - ◆ **Take nutritional and herbal supplements** to eliminate unwanted gut bacteria and to help control yeast overgrowth (Pizzorno KJE Jr, Murray MT. *Textbook of Natural Medicine*. Kenmore, WA: Bastyr University, 1995).
- On average, treatment takes 10 weeks from test to finish, but it may sometimes take a bit longer.