

Taking the low FODMAPs approach to irritable bowel syndrome



All about irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is one of the most commonly diagnosed gastrointestinal disorders and can have a significant impact on your quality of life.^{1a} It causes symptoms like:



stomach cramps



bloating



diarrhoea



constipation^{1b,2a}

The exact cause of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is unknown^{1c,2b} but it is believed to be linked to food moving through the gut too quickly or too slowly, sensitive nerves in the gut, stress or a family history of IBS.^{2b} Assessing your diet is the first step to managing your symptoms.^{3a}

The low FODMAP diet, what it is and how it works

GET TO KNOW THE FODMAPS BEFORE YOU START.

FODMAPs stand for oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, and polyols.^{1d,e} FODMAPs are poorly absorbed by the small intestine drawing more water into the colon. They are rapidly broken down by the colon bacteria, causing symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).^{1f}

Take the following steps to ease those symptoms

The low FODMAP diet consists of two phases. In the first phase you will eliminate foods that are high in FODMAPs for 6 to 8 weeks. Keep a diary to track your symptoms. If your symptoms are successfully controlled, you can start the second phase, which is less strict. In this phase you will gradually add high FODMAP foods back into your diet while maintaining adequate symptom control.^{1f}

Step 1

Elimination

Take out high FODMAP

Step 2

Reintroduction

Add certain FODMAP foods back into your diet and monitor your symptoms

Step 3

Personalisation

Create a diet plan that provides IBS symptoms relief



What to put into your grocery basket?

Going grocery shopping can be overwhelming. A shopping list with all the right food choices will simplify your visit to the grocery store.



List of foods to eat and avoid^{1d}

FOOD TYPE	AVOID – HIGH-FODMAP FOODS	ALTERNATIVE
Oligosaccharides (fructans/ galactooligosaccharides)	<p>Vegetables: artichokes, asparagus, beets, brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, fennel, garlic, leeks, okra, onions, peas, shallots</p> <p>Fruits: watermelon, apple, white peaches, persimmon</p> <p>Wheat and rye when eaten in large amounts (e.g, bread, pasta, couscous, cookies, crackers, biscuits)</p> <p>Legumes: chickpeas, lentils, kidney beans, baked beans, soy beans</p>	<p>Bamboo shoots, bell peppers, bok choy, carrots, celery, chard, chayote, chives, choy sum, corn, eggplant, green beans, lettuce, parsnips, pumpkins, spring onions (green part only), tomatoes; onion and garlic substitutes: garlic-infused oil</p> <p>Bananas, blueberries, cantaloupes, carambola, durian, grapefruit, grapes, honeydew melon, kiwi, lemons, limes, mandarin, oranges, passion fruit, pawpaw, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos</p> <p>Gluten-free and spelt bread and cereal products</p> <p>Canned chickpeas</p>
(Disaccharides lactose)	Milk (cow, goat, sheep), yogurt, soft cheeses, custard, ice cream	Lactose-free milk and yogurt, rice milk, hard cheeses, butter, ice cream substitutes such as gelato and sorbet
Monosaccharides (fructose)	<p>Fruits: apples, Asian pears, pears, clingstone peaches, mango, sugar snap peas, watermelon, canned fruit in natural juice; large total fructose dose: concentrated fruit sources; large servings of fruit, dried fruit, fruit juice</p> <p>Honey</p> <p>Sweeteners: fructose, high fructose corn syrup</p>	<p>As listed above</p> <p>Maple syrup, golden syrup</p> <p>Sweeteners: any except polyols</p>
Polyols	<p>Vegetables: avocados, cauliflower, mushrooms, snow peas, sweet corn</p> <p>Fruits: apples, apricots, Asian pears, cherries, longon, lychee, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, prunes, watermelon</p> <p>Sweeteners: isomalt, maltitol, mannitol, sorbitol, xylitol</p>	<p>As listed above</p> <p>As listed above</p> <p>Sucrose, glucose</p>

It is important to note that you'll need expert help when starting the low FODMAPs diet. A dietician can help you with setting up an eating plan and helping you discover what works for your body and what triggers your IBS symptoms.

- Remember that the low FODMAP diet isn't for life.
- Discuss your progress with your dietician or healthcare professional. After 6 to 8 weeks, they can help you with gradually reintroducing high FODMAP foods.
- FODMAPs are found in everyday foods.
- Take it slow and don't put too much pressure on yourself.
- Get the support of friends and family.
- Plan ahead as going to a restaurant can be stressful. If possible, get the menu beforehand.
- Preparing meals can become tricky but get creative and have fun with trying out new recipes.

BY MANAGING YOUR IBS SYMPTOMS THROUGH THE LOW FODMAP DIET, YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE.



References: 1. Dugum M, Barco K, Garg S. Managing irritable bowel syndrome: The low-FODMAP diet. *Cleve Clin J Med.* 2016;83(9):655-662. 2. NHS. [Internet] What is IBS? Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). [updated 2021 February 24; cited 2022 June 14]. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/>. 3. Eiden KA. Nutritional Considerations in Inflammatory Bowel Disease. *Pract. Gastroentero.* 2003;5:33-54.