



Glynis Barber

TAME YOUR TUMMY

Got digestive troubles?
Our holistic guru reveals
how to manage the
symptoms to ease your IBS

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a mystery as well as a misery. It's often diagnosed when no other cause for symptoms can be found. In other words, it's a diagnosis of exclusion, for which all other possible causes of symptoms have been ruled out. And these symptoms are varied and numerous – bloating, constipation, diarrhoea, backache, abdominal cramping, excess wind, difficulty in passing urine, nausea, tiredness, indigestion, muscle pain, and even anxiety and depression. That's not even the entire list! Once you have the diagnosis, there's not much the doctor can do to help relieve what is often a life-long condition.

So, what do we know about IBS? The term was first coined in the 1940s, so it's nothing new. It's a disorder of the gastrointestinal tract. We now know that the gut governs how the rest of the body functions, from our immune system to the neurotransmitters which affect our mood. Our overall health and wellbeing relies on our digestive system functioning properly. It affects our hormones, muscles, nerves, bones and brains, to name a few. The reason for this is that the digestive tract is where we assimilate

our environment. The one-cell layer of the lining of our tract must decide what is incorporated into our bodies and what gets eliminated through our stools. One can assume that, with IBS, this crucial and intricate process is not being conducted properly. This can have some serious implications on health and lead to more severe ailments in the future.

The good news is that integrative medicine has offered relief and help for many years. Experts have found that there are several gastrointestinal conditions that are associated with IBS, which can be treated and often cured. Things such as food sensitivities (often due to changes made to foods by the food industry in the last few decades) can create havoc with our guts. These 'new' foods, in the form of additives, preservatives and emulsifiers, are not recognised by our DNA and do not promote good health.

Parasitic infections can be treated with herbs and benign medications. Candida is another big problem for many people, largely thanks to the overuse of antibiotics and excessive sugar in our diets. This is a tough one to diagnose and equally tough to get rid of, requiring a stringent diet for many months, but most definitely worth the effort. Too much fructose is another big problem for our guts. We are only able to absorb about 25-50g in one meal and, for some people, it's less than 25g. The addition of high-fructose corn syrup to many processed foods has led to IBS-type symptoms in numerous people.

Diagnosing the many ailments that can lead to IBS takes a lot of investigative work and requires patience on the part of both patient and doctor. But remember your gut is the key to your health and, indeed, your happiness.

THE GOOD GUT GUIDE

1. Seek out a doctor who is prepared to take the time to find the cause of your symptoms and not just write a prescription for a conventional medication that will give you short-term relief. This will usually be a doctor of integrative or functional medicine.
2. Avoid processed foods. Eat meals with fresh ingredients as much as possible.
3. Stress can also play a part in IBS. Be sure to take time to relax.
4. Keep a diary of what you eat for a few weeks to see if there's any particular food that triggers a reaction.
5. Try a course of probiotics to see if it helps relieve any of your symptoms.



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