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## IBS Diet: What to Do and What to Avoid

The influence of diet is unique to each person. **There is no generalized dietary advice that will work for everyone.**

A healthcare provider can take a brief dietary history and help identify dietary and/or other factors that may impact symptoms. Keeping a diary for 2–3 weeks of dietary intake, symptoms, and any associated factors (like daily obligations, stressors, poor sleep, medications) can help with this.

For those with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) who benefit from simple dietary modifications, it makes sense to adjust the diet and reduce the intake of the offending food. It does not make sense to adopt unnecessarily limited diets. This can lead to reduced quality of life or even malnutrition.

Healthcare providers and patients need to talk about diet. Guidance needs to be provided by a knowledgeable health care professional (like a healthcare provider or registered dietician). They can assess individual circumstances affecting IBS, while helping make sure that nutritional needs are being met through a balanced diet, and healthy eating habits.

[Learn More About Talking To Your Healthcare Provider \(/living-with-ibs/your-healthcare-team\)](/living-with-ibs/your-healthcare-team)

### Tips for an IBS-Friendly Diet

Meals may seem to trigger symptoms. It may be the process of eating and not a certain food that sets off your symptoms. Eating stimulates the digestive tract, which can over-respond because of IBS.

- Try eating smaller meals, more often, spread throughout your day. Instead of 3 meals, try 5 or 6 regularly scheduled small meals.
- Slow down; don't rush through meals.
- Avoid meals that over-stimulate everyone's gut, like large meals or high-fat foods. If you are constipated try to make sure you have breakfast as this is the meal that is most likely to

...conspicuous, try to make sure you have breakfast, as this is the meal that is most likely to stimulate the colon and give you a bowel movement.

If you think a certain food is a problem, try cutting it out of your diet for about 12 weeks. (If you suspect more than one, cut out one at a time so you know which one causes you problems.) If there's no change, go back to eating it.

The foods most likely to cause problems are:

- *Insoluble* (cereal) fiber
- Coffee/caffeine
- Chocolate
- Nuts

## FODMAPs

Poorly absorbable, highly gas-forming carbohydrates are associated with increased IBS symptoms in some people. These foods are collectively called FODMAPs. [Learn more here.](#) (</treatment/ibs-diet/low-fodmap-diet/>). Be sure to eat a healthy diet. If food is a major problem for you, talk to your healthcare providers or a registered dietitian to work out a meal plan that's best for you.

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