

Irritable Bowel Syndrome & the Low FODMAPs Diet

Irritable bowel syndrome affects an estimated 1 in 10 people causing symptoms that can range from bloating and constipation to diarrhoea and cramps. Irritable bowel is often diagnosed when no other cause of the problem can be found but it is a disease in its own right.

WHAT CAUSES IBS?

IBS can have several causes. Intolerance to lactose is a common cause but disturbances in gut bacteria, gastroenteritis, lack of fibre and stress can all play a role.

For many people, a change in diet can make all of the difference. Sometimes the change can be a simple one like adding more fibre or drinking more water.



For others, these simple changes make little difference and so a different diet might be needed.

One diet that works very well for many people with IBS is a low FODMAP Diet.

WHAT IS A FODMAP DIET?

FODMAPs is the name given to a range of substances called 'fermentable carbohydrates' that include fructose and several oligosaccharides. The FODMAP diet removes these fermentable carbohydrates from your diet.

Some people with IBS do not absorb these FODMAPs as normal so they make their way through the bowel to where their own bacteria ferment them.

When this happens, they produce a lot of gas and other chemicals that can lead to diarrhoea, bloating, excess wind and/or constipation.

Removing FODMAPs from your diet can help to relieve symptoms of IBS and some studies show that it may also help with conditions such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

WOULD A LOW FODMAP DIET HELP ME?

You may benefit from a low FODMAP diet if you have some of the following symptoms:

- Bloating that comes and goes
- Bloating that is worse after eating or in the evening
- Bloating that is visible to others (pregnancy look)
- Frequent, unexplained, diarrhoea
- Constipation, especially constipation with bloating
- Abdominal cramps with bloating
- Excessive flatulence/wind
- Urgent need to open bowels

ARE THERE ANY TESTS I SHOULD HAVE BEFORE STARTING THE LOW FODMAP DIET?

Yes. Symptoms like bloating, diarrhoea and cramps can have lots of causes and it is important to speak to your GP about your symptoms and make sure it is IBS that you have. This is especially important if your symptoms have just started recently.

You also need to be tested for coeliac disease. Anyone with a diagnosis of IBS needs to have coeliac disease ruled out by a blood test or biopsy. Your GP will be able to arrange this for you.

DO I NEED TO SEE A DIETITIAN FOR A LOW FODMAP DIET?

Although there is a lot of information about low FODMAP diets available on the internet, this is a quite a complicated diet to get right and the best benefits are seen where people work with a low FODMAP trained Dietitian.

It is also quite a restrictive diet at the start so you need to be sure that your diet is balanced nutritionally while you are in the elimination phase.

The diet has two main phases: the elimination phase where all FODMAPs are removed and then the reintroduction/challenge phase that helps to pin point which FODMAPs you can tolerate and which you need to keep avoiding.

Working with your dietitian will help you to follow the low FODMAP diet correctly and help keep your overall diet nutritionally balanced.

If you would like to make an appointment for a low FODMAP diet you can contact the **Albany Clinic** on **01 6612222**. If you have any questions you can contact **Sarah Keogh** at **info@eatwell.ie**.

