

IBS options



Main symptom(s)	Options	Benefits	Serious Harms and Side Effects
Constipation (Avoid lactulose in constipation)	Soluble fibre such as <u>ispaghula</u> This is available on prescription, or in oats, nuts and linseeds, and in some fruit and vegetables. (Check the fibre is soluble or not).	17% of people find it helpful (NNT 6). It is more likely to help if you're prone to constipation. 	No serious harms. It may make your bowels looser. Any side effects settle when the treatment is stopped.
Any IBS symptom	<u>Change your eating habits.</u> Eat as regularly as possible avoid eating too much fruit, caffeine, sorbitol in sugar-free gum and drinks (sweeteners).	These changes can also help you to lose weight and to lower your cholesterol.	None
	Try yoghurt's containing probiotics or probiotic capsules.	These changes can also help you to lose weight and to lower your cholesterol.	None
	Increase your exercise levels (a pedometer or exercise app might help).	These changes can also help you to lose weight and to lower your cholesterol.	None
Any IBS symptom	The Low FODMAP diet	Helps 25% of people (NNT 4).  	For this to work most people need to see a dietician.
Pain, spasms and bloating You can either take these regularly, if you get pain most days, or just when you get pain.	Peppermint oil capsules	40% of people find this helpful (NNT 2.5)  	None or any side effects settle when the treatment is stopped
	Hyoscine.	Helps in 30% (NNT 3.5) 	Dry mouth and slightly blurry vision
	Mebeverine	Can help in 25% (NNT 4)  	None.
Pain, spasms and bloating.	Drugs that work on nerves, to reduce pain and gut movement, can help. For example: amitriptyline 5 to 30 mg,	Amitriptyline works for 25% of people (NNT4) it may also help you to sleep.  	Dry mouth and drowsiness if the dose is too high. Sedation may increase the risk of falls.
Pain, spasms and bloating.	Psychological therapies:	It is more likely to be helpful if there are obvious psychological factors behind your symptoms.	No significant known harms
	e.g. CBT	CBT works in 25% of people (NNT4).  	
	e.g. Hypnotherapy	30 to 50% of people find hypnotherapy (NNT2-3) gives significant improvement. 	
Diarrhoea	Loperamide may help if diarrhoea is a problem.		Constipation

Number needed to treat (NNT) means the number of people who would have to use each treatment option for one extra person to get benefit compared to dummy (placebo) treatment. But for many conditions dummy treatment is very effective. e.g. for IBS NNT = 4

Your doctor should do a TTG blood test to rule out coeliac disease.

Understanding irritable bowel syndrome can ease your symptoms.

Knowing that it is not caused by a serious condition, such as cancer, can help enormously. It's also helpful to know that it's not your fault, nor is it all in your mind.

However, stress can make it worse, and tackling anxiety can improve it too.