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Irritable Bowel Syndrome With Diarrhea: Diet Solutions

The constant urge to go to the bathroom can be uncomfortable and embarrassing; it's enough to make a person with IBS shun certain foods and situations.

The good news is that there are dietary changes people with IBS can make to ease the rage of the runs. And you needn't completely give up any foods.

"Moderation is important," says Leslie Bonci, MPH, RD, author of the *American Dietetic Association (ADA) Guide to Better Digestion*. It's important to maintain a balanced diet for good health when you have IBS. So never completely avoid certain groups of foods, or you may be deprived of nutrients your body needs.

"People need to be able to take the time to experiment a little bit to find out what works for them," says Bonci. "People could be selective with what they have, saying, 'OK, I'm no good with apples, but I'm alright with a pear. Or grapes don't work for me, but I'm OK with having a little bit of a banana.'"

Keep a symptom journal to track which foods and which amounts cause bouts of diarrhea. It's the best way to figure out which foods cause you problems. Remember, different foods have different affects on each person.

Get the Right Type of Fiber for IBS Relief

There are certain elements in foods that are known to quicken bowel movement. Fiber is one of them, which is why fiber helps relieve constipation. Don't avoid fiber if you have diarrhea. It helps protect your body against heart disease and possibly cancer, so you need it.

Instead, Bonci suggests you eat more soluble fiber rather than insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber stays in the gut longer, adding bulk to the colon, which helps the colon work normally.

You find soluble fiber in:

- Dried or canned beans
- Peas
- Oats
- Barley
- Brown rice
- The flesh of fruits such as apples and oranges
- Dried fruits
- Vegetables such as carrots

For comparison, insoluble fiber is found in the skins of fruits and root vegetables, in whole-wheat products, wheat and corn bran and in vegetables such as cauliflower and green beans.

Drink Plenty of Water

If you have IBS with diarrhea, make sure you drink six to eight 8-ounce glasses of plain water each day, but not always with meals.

"Water just makes everything run through a little more rapidly," says Bonci. She suggests drinking water an hour before or an hour after meals.

Be Wary of Certain Foods

Each person with IBS reacts differently to foods. Only you know which foods send you running to the bathroom. But while you figure out your own triggers, you might want to take special care with foods known to cause symptoms in some people with IBS:

- Broccoli, onions, and cabbage
- Fried or fatty foods such as French fries
- Milk products such as cheese or ice cream
- Alcohol
- Caffeine in coffee, teas, and some sodas
- Carbonated sodas
- Chocolate

Sorbitol, a sugar substitute found in sugarless gum and mints, and fructose, a simple sugar found in honey and some fruits, also trigger IBS symptoms in some people.

How you eat may also trigger symptoms. Some people are bothered by foods with extreme temperatures, particularly if consumed together, such as ice-cold water and steaming hot soup. Many people develop symptoms after large meals. Try to eat less at each meal, or have four or five small meals a day.

Remember, your reactions to foods are unique, says Bonci. So experiment with different foods until you've developed your own IBS nutrition prescription.

"There isn't an IBS diet, per se," Bonci says. Some people will find they're OK with particular foods, and other people find there's just no way."