

tips for managing IBS

Dietitian and Field Doctor Co-Founder **Sasha Watkins** shares her **top ways for managing** and **understanding IBS symptoms**

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), is a **common digestive condition** that may affect more than 1 in 10 people¹ in the UK. There is no specific cause for the condition and may be a combination of food and stresses that trigger painful IBS symptoms.

IBS symptoms include: stomach pain/stomach cramps, bloating, wind, diarrhoea and/or constipation. There may not be a quick fix for IBS but there are many things you can do to get on your way to tackling the daily discomfort of IBS.

10 top tips

Don't suffer in silence

- 1 Don't be afraid to ask for help. Many people leave their symptoms for years and years as they are too embarrassed to talk about them or they are unaware that there is something they can do to improve their symptoms.

Get a proper diagnosis

- 2 Don't lose hours to Google or online intolerance tests! Please contact your GP to get a proper diagnosis of IBS and rule out any other conditions with similar symptoms (e.g. coeliac disease).

Everyone is different

- 3 There is no one-size fits-all approach to dealing with IBS. There are several ways to deal with IBS, but the effectiveness will vary from person to person and their specific symptoms. Anticipate trial and error at first and changes along the way.

Make one change at a time

- 4 Keep a record of which foods, events or activities trigger your symptoms and then monitor any changes you make. By only changing one thing you can better understand what has helped.

¹ [https://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565\(12\)00308-4/fulltext](https://www.cghjournal.org/article/S1542-3565(12)00308-4/fulltext)

Choose reliable sources of information

- 5 There is a lot of misinformation online so be picky about which advice you follow. Reliable sources of information include; NHS website, NHS health care practitioners, The IBS Network, the British Dietetic Association.

Think about how you eat

- 6 Eat regular meals each day, trying not to skip any meals or eating late at night. Smaller meal sizes may ease symptoms and take time to eat your meals, chewing your food well.

Explore possible dietary triggers

- 7 Common triggers for IBS symptoms include processed, fatty or fried foods, alcohol, caffeine, spicy foods, not drinking sufficient fluids or eating enough fibre. If you want further dietary guidance please ask your GP to refer you to a dietitian.

Consider the low FODMAP diet

- 8 A special type of diet that avoids foods high in FODMAP's (Fermentable Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides and Polyols) can also be effective but it should only be done under the supervision of an IBS dietitian to ensure it is done safely and properly.

Think beyond diet

- 9 Stress and lifestyle factors play a big role in IBS. Take time to relax, try meditation, do regular exercise, get enough sleep or consider counselling.

Don't give up!

- 10 It is possible to live well with IBS. It may take some determination to get there. Be kind to yourself as it is incredibly hard having IBS and it may feel frustrating or even frightening at times. You don't have to do it alone, there is support available!

