



GI Wellness

A Guide to Understanding and Managing
Your Gut Health



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER



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For a digital copy of this guide, please visit go.osu.edu/pted5672.

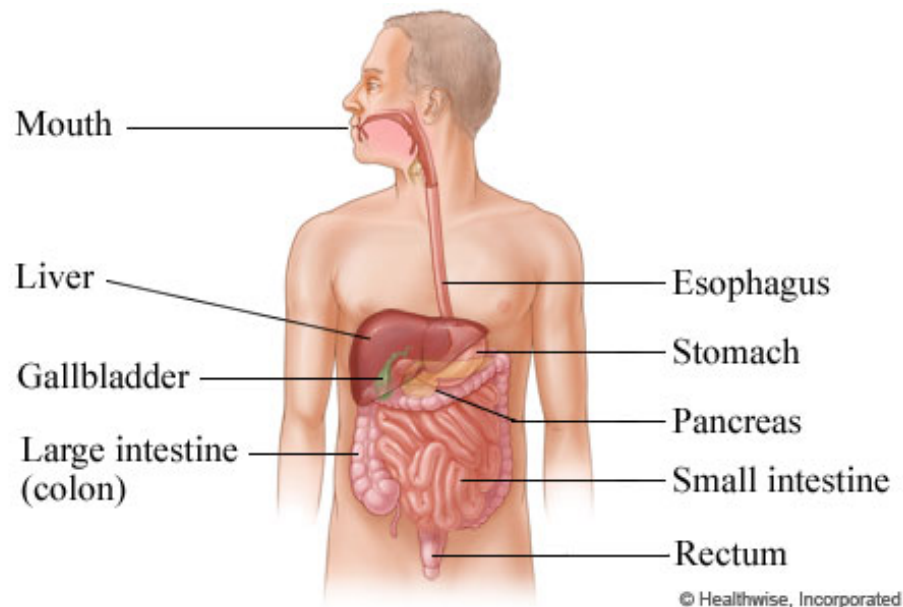
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Overview of Gut Health

What is gut health?

Your gut is another name for your **digestive system**. It includes your stomach, intestines, and other parts that help break down food. A healthy gut helps your body get the nutrients it needs and keeps you feeling good.

Digestive System



Why gut health matters

Gut health has an important role in your overall health. It:

- Helps your body digest food and absorb nutrients
- Supports your immune system (helps fight off germs)
- Affects your mood and energy
- Keeps your bathroom habits regular

Common gut problems

These gut problems and tips for relief are discussed in detail later in this guide:

- Nausea
- Bloating
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO)
- Gastroparesis
- Diverticulosis
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)

What affects gut health?

These factors can help or hurt your gut health:

Diet

- The food you eat affects the balance of bacteria in your gut. You have good bacteria and bad bacteria in your gut. These tiny bacteria are part of the digestion process.
- Eating lots of fiber, fruits, vegetables, and fermented foods (like yogurt, sauerkraut) helps grow good bacteria.
- Eating too many processed foods, sugary snacks, and artificial ingredients can harm your gut and cause stomach problems.

Fluids

- Drinking water helps your intestines work well and keeps your digestion smooth.
- Staying hydrated helps your body absorb nutrients and move food through your system.
- Your water needs are unique and may be different from one day to another. Your gender, activity level, and environment can affect how much fluid you need.
- Focus on drinking water throughout the day, not just when you are thirsty.

Physical Activity

- Get regular exercise to help your gut stay healthy.
- It improves digestion, helps your body absorb nutrients, and keeps your metabolism working well.

Stress

- Feeling stressed for a long time can upset your digestion. It may cause bloating, stomach pain, or changes in bathroom habits.
- When you are stressed, your body focuses on your muscles, brain, and heart — not your digestion.
- When you are calm, your body can focus on digesting food properly.



Mindful Eating

Mindful eating means paying attention to how you eat and how food makes you feel. It can help your body digest better and help you feel more in control of your eating.

Mindful eating tips

Be Relaxed

- Take a few deep breaths before and during your meal to help calm your body.
- If you feel stressed, try taking a short walk, watching something fun, or doing something that helps you relax before eating.

Breathe Deeply

- Try belly breathing. This helps relax your muscles and helps with digestion. See page 13 for more information.

Be Present

- Focus on your food. Think about how it tastes, smells, feels, and looks.
- This helps your brain and stomach work together while you eat.

Listen to Your Body

- Ask yourself: Am I eating because I am hungry, bored, or stressed?
- If you are not hungry, try doing something else like reading, walking, or talking to a friend.
- Try not to watch TV or look at your phone while eating. This helps you notice when you are full.

Slow Down

- Take small bites and chew your food well.
- Eating slowly helps you know when you are full, so you do not overeat.
- Tip: Put your fork or spoon down between bites while you chew and swallow.





Meal Schedule

Sticking to a meal schedule helps your body stay in balance and keeps your hunger under control.

Here are some easy tips to follow

Plan Your Meals

- Try to eat around the same times each day. This helps you avoid snacking too much and makes it easier to eat balanced meals.
- Keep basic foods in your pantry and freezer, like oats, frozen veggies, canned tuna, and low sodium canned beans.
- Cook bigger meals, so you can save leftovers for later.

Organize Your Day

- Do not skip meals or wait too long between eating. This can make you feel extra hungry and cause you to eat too fast or too much.
- If you feel hungry between meals, eat small snacks with a source of protein and fiber, such as vegetables with hummus or an apple with natural peanut butter.
 - Good protein sources include yogurt, nuts, cheese, or boiled eggs.
 - Good fiber sources include fruits, vegetables, or seeds.

To learn more about meal planning, ask for the “Meal Planning Book” or visit go.osu.edu/pted5168.

Bathroom Habits

Following good bathroom habits can help make going to the toilet easier and more comfortable.

Healthy bathroom habits

Keep It Short

- Try to spend no more than 5 minutes on the toilet.
- If you cannot go, leave the bathroom and come back when you feel the urge again.

No Phones

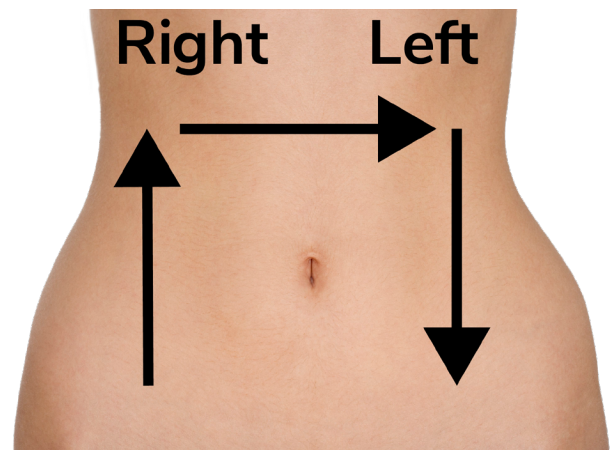
- Do not use your phone while on the toilet. It can confuse the signals between your brain and body and make you stay longer than needed.

Do Not Strain

- Do not push too hard to poop. If your stool (poop) is hard, see the handout “Constipation” on pages 17 and 18 for tips to help soften it.

Help Your Body Relax

- Practice belly breathing to help your muscles relax and make it easier to go. See page 13 for more information.
- Do **abdominal massage** (in a clockwise motion). How to do it:
 1. Start on the lower right side of your stomach.
 2. Use your fingertips to gently rub in a circle going up toward your ribs.
 3. Move across your belly to the left side.
 4. Rub down to the lower left side, then back up toward your belly button.
 5. Rub each side for about 1 minute. The whole massage should take 2 to 3 minutes.
 6. Repeat the massage for 10 minutes, 1 or 2 times a day or as directed. Be sure to listen to your body and adjust the frequency based on how you feel.



Healthy Eating Habits

Eating well helps your body feel better and stay strong.

Here are some easy tips to follow

Your Eating Pattern Matters

- Try to eat mostly plant-based foods like fruits, veggies, beans, and grains.
- Do not worry about being perfect — look at your whole diet, not just one meal.
- Make small changes one at a time. It is okay to go slow!
- Try new foods to get the different nutrients your body needs.

Fiber

- Eat fiber during meals and snacks to help your digestion.
- Good fiber foods: fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds.
- Try to make half your plate non-starchy veggies like broccoli, spinach, or carrots.
- Add fiber slowly, so your body can get used to digesting it.
- If fiber bothers your stomach, change the type or texture to help.
- See page 9 for more information.

Protein

- Eat protein with every meal and snack.
- Good choices: skinless chicken, fish (like salmon, tuna), eggs, and low fat dairy.
- Plant-based options: beans, nuts, seeds, quinoa, and soy milk.

Fats

- Eat healthy fats like those in fish, avocado, nuts, and olive oil.
- Avoid fried foods and heavy cream sauces.
- Choose fats that are liquid at room temperature (like olive oil) instead of solid (like butter, coconut oil).

Sugar

- Limit added sugar to less than 10 grams per serving.
- Cut back on sweets, candy, and sugary drinks (like soda, sweet tea).

Processed Foods

- Try to eat fewer packaged or processed foods. Fresh is best!

Probiotics

- Eat foods with good bacteria to help your gut, like yogurt, kefir, pickled veggies, kimchi, and sauerkraut.
- See page 10 for more information.

Stay Hydrated

- Focus on drinking water throughout the day, not just when you are thirsty.
- See page 11 for more information.

Fiber

Why fiber is good for you

- Helps your stomach and gut stay healthy, so your body can use food better.
- Keeps your bowel movements regular.
- Helps control blood sugar levels.
- Supports heart health by improving good cholesterol.
- Helps you feel full and manage your weight.

Where to get fiber

- **Food:** Fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, and seeds.
- **Supplements:** Fiber powders, pills, or gummies.

Tips to eat more fiber

Start Slow

- Begin with small amounts of fiber (less than 3 grams of fiber per serving).
- Add more little by little as your body gets used to it.
- Eat fiber throughout the day, not all at once. Aim for 25 to 38 grams per day.
- Discuss your fiber needs with your dietitian. The amount you need per day depends on your gender and overall nutrition and health status.
- Drink plenty of water when eating more fiber.

Make Fiber Easier to Digest

- Peel fruits and veggies and take out seeds.
- Cook veggies and beans until soft.
- Try soft foods like oatmeal, bananas, melons, and avocado.
- Try canned fruit in 100% juice.
- Choose smooth options like applesauce, bean dip, hummus, or peanut butter instead of whole fruits, beans, or nuts.

Watch Your Portion Size

- Learn how much fiber your body can handle.
- Increase slowly and stay steady with how much you eat at each meal.
- If you feel bloated or constipated, slow down or stop adding more fiber.

Choosing a supplement

Types of Fiber Supplements

- **Powders:** Usually most effective.
- **Pills/Capsules:** You may need to take many to get enough fiber.
- **Gummies:** Often have little fiber and may cause gas or bloating.

Common Fiber Ingredients

- **Psyllium Husk (like Konsyl):** Helps soften stool and lower cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar.
- **Guar Gum (like Sunfiber, Regular Girl):** Easy to digest and helps slow down digestion.
- **Wheat Dextrin (like Benefiber):** Helps with diarrhea.
- **Methylcellulose (like Citrucel):** Forms a gel to help stool move through your body.
- **Calcium Polycarbophil (like FiberCon):** May act like a laxative and help with stool control.

Taking supplements safely

- Do not take fiber supplements if you are constipated and have not had a bowel movement.
- Start with a small dose (¼ to ½ of the full amount).
- Slowly increase to a full dose as your body adjusts.
- Drink lots of water to help fiber work well.

Probiotics

Probiotics are tiny living germs (called bacteria) that are good for your body — especially your stomach and intestines. They help keep your gut healthy by balancing the bacteria inside it.

Probiotic foods

You can find probiotics in some foods like:

- Yogurt
- Kefir (a drink made from fermented milk)
- Sauerkraut and kimchi (fermented vegetables)
- Pickles (if made without vinegar)
- Miso and tempeh (fermented soy foods)



Probiotic supplements

Probiotics can also come in pills or powders. People sometimes take them to help with digestion, reduce gut problems, or after taking antibiotics.

If you want to try one, ask your doctor or dietitian for advice. You can also read the “Clinical Guide to Probiotic Products Available in USA” from AEPProbio to compare products. Visit go.osu.edu/probiotic-guide to learn about available products, what health conditions they help, dosage, and amount to take per day.

- Research is still ongoing, so results may vary.
- Try probiotics for 4 to 6 weeks, then take a break to see if they helped.

Fluids

Stay hydrated

Be Careful with Activity and Weather

- Your body needs more fluids when you are active or when it is hot or cold outside.
- Pay attention to how you feel and drink more if needed. A hydrated person has a moist mouth and light-colored urine.

Smart Ways to Drink Fluids

- Sip fluids **between** meals, not during meals.
- Take slow, steady sips all day long.
- Limit drinks with caffeine like coffee, tea, and energy drinks.
- Avoid sugary drinks like soda, lemonade, iced tea, and fruit juice.
- Watch out for sugar alcohols like sorbitol, xylitol, and mannitol (found in some foods and medicines). These can upset your stomach.

What is oral rehydration solution (ORS)?

ORS is a special drink that helps your body absorb water better. It has the right mix of water, salt, and sugar.

When to Use ORS

- If you are losing fluids from vomiting or diarrhea.
- If you feel dehydrated (dark pee, dry mouth, tired, thirsty).

Tips for Using ORS

- Drink ORS instead of coffee, soda, juice, and plain or flavored waters.
- ORS should be your main drink when you are dehydrated.

- Other drinks, such as those with caffeine or sugar, can make dehydration worse.
- **Start with 4 (8-ounce) cups or 32 ounces a day.** If you feel okay, slowly increase to 8 to 12 (8-ounce) cups or 64 to 96 ounces a day.

Where to get ORS

Buy It

You can find ORS in stores or online. Look for these brands:

- Pedialyte®
- Drip Drop®
- Liquid IV Hydration Multiplier®
- Ceralyte®

Make Your Own

A less expensive option is to make your own ORS. Here are some easy recipes:

- **World Health Organization (WHO) Mix:**
4 (8-ounce) cups water + 6 teaspoons sugar + ½ teaspoon salt.
Add a packet of Crystal Light for flavor if you like.
- **Coconut Water Mix:**
2 (8-ounce) cups coconut water + 2 (8-ounce) cups water + 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice + ½ teaspoon salt + fresh fruit, such as berries, for flavor.
- **Gatorade Mix:**
4 (8-ounce) cups Gatorade G2 + ½ teaspoon salt.
- **Juice Mix:**
¾ cup apple, grape, or cranberry juice + 3¼ cups water + ¾ teaspoon salt.
- **Lemonade Mix:**
4 (8-ounce) cups water + 2 tablespoons lemonade powder + ¾ teaspoon salt.



Physical Activity

Being active every day helps your body work better, including your digestion and bowel movements.

Stay active for better health

Why Exercise Helps

- Regular exercise can help your body have normal bowel movements.
- Any physical activity is better than none. Start small and add more over time.

Make It a Habit

- Try to make exercise part of your daily routine.
- Pick activities you enjoy, like walking, swimming, biking, dancing, or stretching.
- Fun exercise helps you relax and stick with it.

When You Do Not Feel Well

- If your stomach is upset, choose gentle exercises (like walking, yoga).
- Focus on building strength in your belly and core muscles.

On Busy Days

- Break your exercise into short sessions, like 10 minutes at a time.
- Stay active during the day by:
 - Taking the stairs instead of the elevator.
 - Parking further from the store.
 - Walking while talking on the phone.
 - Standing up while working on the computer.

Belly Breathing

Breathing exercises, like belly breathing, are a good way to relax, reduce tension, and relieve stress. This is because when you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body.

Belly breathing helps to relax your belly muscles and reduce your symptoms. It is simple to learn and easy to do.

How to do belly breathing



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1. Lie on your back. You can put a small rolled towel behind your neck or use a pillow for comfort. Or you can prop yourself up on several pillows.
2. Put one hand on your belly and the other on your chest.
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose. When you breathe in, push your belly out as far as possible. You should feel the hand on your belly move out, while the hand on your chest does not move.
4. Breathe out slowly through your mouth. When you breathe out, you should feel the hand on your belly move in.

Practice this breathing method 3 or 4 times a day for about 10 minutes each time.

When you can do this type of breathing well while lying down, **learn to do it while sitting or standing.**

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Nausea

Nausea is when you feel sick to your stomach. You may not have a good appetite. Sometimes, when nausea is bad, you may also vomit.

What causes nausea?

Nausea is not a condition on its own. It is usually a sign or a symptom of another condition.

Possible Causes of Nausea

- Eating very large meals or eating too fast
- Not eating for a long time
- Illness or infections
- Change in your bowel movements (diarrhea or constipation)
- Dehydration
- Health conditions, like:
 - Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
 - Gastroparesis — a condition where the stomach empties food more slowly than normal
 - Migraines
 - Side effects of some medicines

Tips to improve nausea

- Stick to a meal schedule. Maintain it even with symptoms. Make your portions smaller and practice mindful eating (see page 5 for more information).
- Do some calming activities, like belly breathing. See page 13 for more information.
- Choose easy to digest meals, such as blended or pureed food. Progress to cooked meals as you feel better.
- **If you do not have a good appetite, ginger might help.**
 - Ginger can help wake up your appetite and get your stomach ready for food.
 - Try ginger tea or ginger chews.
 - Chew a small slice of fresh ginger root — about the size of a nickel.
 - Chew 10 to 15 minutes — chew it into a paste and swallow it, or spit it out.
 - For extra flavor, you can squeeze a little lime juice on it and sprinkle on some salt.

Bloating

Bloating is when your belly feels full, tight, or swollen — often because of gas or changes in digestion. It can make your stomach look bigger and feel uncomfortable. Some people also feel pressure or mild pain.

What causes bloating?

If you feel bloated, it is important to figure out what is causing it. Once you know the reason, you can treat it and feel better.

Possible Causes of Bloating

- **Bathroom problems:** Change in your bowel habits, especially constipation, can lead to bloating.
- **Certain foods:** Some foods are harder to digest and can cause gas for some people. These include:
 - Beans
 - Dairy, like milk and cheese
 - Foods high in FODMAPs (a type of carb) — see page 21 for more information
 - Sugars and sugar alcohols (found in gum and candy)
- **Eating habits** or how you eat:
 - Eat too fast or don't chew well
 - Drink through a straw
 - Chew gum often
 - Go too long between meals
- **Health conditions**, like:
 - Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
 - Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO)
 - Celiac disease — trouble digesting gluten

Tips to improve bloating

- Improve bowel movements
- Identify your food triggers
- Practice mindful eating — see page 5 for more information
- Treat underlying health conditions

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is when you have loose, watery stools (poop) more often than usual. It can happen just once or last for several days. Diarrhea may come with belly cramps, bloating, or an urgent need to go to the bathroom.

What causes diarrhea?

It can be caused by food, infections, stress, or certain health conditions. If it lasts more than a few days or comes with other symptoms like fever or dehydration, talk to your doctor.

Some possible causes include:

- Irritable bowel syndrome with diarrhea (IBS-D)
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- Overflow diarrhea from constipation
- Trouble absorbing nutrients, like sugar or fat
- Infections
- Side effects from medicine
- Food poisoning

Ways to help with diarrhea

Try these diet tips and other gut health tips on pages 5 to 8 in this guide to feel better:

Fiber

- Choose soft options that are easy to break down.
- Ask your dietitian about taking fiber supplements, like wheat dextrin or hydrolyzed guar gum. See page 9 for more information.

Fat

- Stay away from greasy or fried foods.
- Eat skinless chicken, lean meats, and

healthy fats, like avocado, fish, and olive oil — but only in small amounts.

- Pick low fat dairy, like yogurt and cheese.

Sugars

- Limit added sugars to less than 10 grams per serving.
- Avoid sugar alcohols, like sorbitol, xylitol, and mannitol (often found in gum and sugar-free snacks).

Fluids

- Cut back on sugary drinks, alcohol, and caffeine.
- Drink fluids that help you rehydrate, like water or oral rehydration drinks. See page 11 for more information.

Supplements

- May help diarrhea:
 - Benefiber
 - Sunfiber
- May make diarrhea worse:
 - Magnesium oxide or citrate (over 350 mg)
 - Vitamin C (over 2,000 mg)
 - Gummy vitamins (they often contain sugar or sugar alcohols)

Constipation

Constipation means having fewer bowel movements than usual or having trouble passing stool (poop). You may be constipated and have multiple bowel movements in a day, but they are all small and incomplete. It can feel like your stool is hard, dry, or painful to push out. You might feel bloated or like you did not fully finish going to the bathroom.

What causes constipation?

Constipation can happen from not eating enough fiber, not drinking enough water, not moving around enough, or from certain health conditions or medicines.

If you have constipation often, talk to your doctor. Some possible causes include:

- Irritable bowel syndrome with constipation (IBS-C)
- Stress
- Slow digestion (called slow GI motility)
- Low thyroid levels (hypothyroidism)
- Intestinal methanogen overgrowth (IMO) — too much methane gas in the gut

Ways to help with constipation

Try these diet tips and other gut health tips on pages 5 to 8 in this guide to feel better:

Kiwi

- Eat 2 green kiwis every day.
- Make a smoothie with kiwi, kefir (a fermented milk drink), a little aloe juice, and papaya. You can add 1 to 2 teaspoons of pure maple syrup if you like.
- Try this **Clean Sweep Smoothie**¹:
 - 1 peeled kiwi
 - 1 to 2 teaspoons chia seeds
 - ½ cup baby spinach
 - 4 ice cubes
 - ½ cup baby kale
 - Add water to thin it
 - ⅛ avocado
 - Optional: Add protein like dairy, nut butter, or protein powder
 - ½ cup frozen pineapple

¹(2025). Katescarlata.com. <https://blog.katescarlata.com/2019/02/08/the-clean-sweep-smoothie/>

Fluids

- Drink more water slowly throughout the day.
- Avoid fizzy drinks, sugary drinks, and caffeine.
- Check your urine — it should be clear. Also watch for signs like dry mouth or feeling thirsty.
- See page 11 for more information.

Supplements

- **Ask your dietitian about taking a probiotic made for constipation.** You can also read the “Clinical Guide to Probiotic Products Available in USA” from AEPProbio to compare products. Visit go.osu.edu/probiotic-guide to learn more.
- Talk to your doctor about laxatives or stool softeners, like MiraLAX, senna, or Dulcolax.
- Try magnesium daily before bed:
 - Take magnesium oxide or citrate. Use magnesium oxide if you have heartburn.
 - Start with 250 mg and increase to 500 mg if needed.
- Do not add more fiber supplements while constipated.
 - Once your constipation improves, you can try psyllium husk fiber (like Konsyl) to keep your bowel movements regular.

Other helpful tips

- Use a toilet stool (like a Squatty Potty) to help your posture when using the toilet.
- Exercise helps your digestion. See page 12 for more information.
- If you feel like you cannot fully go to the bathroom, ask your doctor about pelvic floor therapy with a physical therapist.

GERD

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

GERD is a condition where stomach acid flows back up into the esophagus — the tube that connects your mouth to your stomach. This can cause a burning feeling in your chest called heartburn, along with other symptoms like:

- Sour taste in your mouth
- Trouble swallowing
- Feeling like food is stuck
- Coughing or hoarseness

GERD happens when the muscle at the bottom of your esophagus (called the lower esophageal sphincter) does not close properly. If you have heartburn often — more than twice a week — you may have GERD. Talk to your doctor.

GERD relief tips

Try these tips and other gut health tips on pages 5 to 8 in this guide to feel better:

Know Your Triggers

Everyone's triggers can be different. Common foods that may cause symptoms include:

- Fatty or large meals
- Spicy foods
- Acidic foods like citrus fruits
- Pepper, peppermint, and chocolate

Diet Tips

- Stop eating 2 to 3 hours before bedtime.
- Eat small, balanced meals throughout the day.
- Avoid greasy or high fat meals, like fried foods and lots of cheese or cream.
- Follow healthy eating habits. See page 8 for more information.

- Limit alcohol.
- If coffee causes heartburn, try low acid decaf coffee.
- Add more fiber to your diet if you can tolerate it.

Non-Diet Tips

- Sit upright while eating — do not eat while slouching or lying on the couch.
- Practice mindful eating — eat slowly and pay attention to your food. See page 5 for more information.
- Try sleeping on your left side to reduce symptoms at night.
- Ask your doctor about alginate supplements, like Reflux Gourmet.
- Some people feel better by drinking alkaline water.
- Stay physically active to support digestion. See page 12 for more information.

IBS

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Doctors use the **Rome Criteria** to help figure out if someone has IBS.

You may have IBS if:

- You have had stomach pain at least 1 day a week for the past 3 months,
And
- Your pain is linked to 2 or more of these changes:
 - You feel better or worse after going to the bathroom.
 - You poop more or less often than usual.
 - Your poop looks different (hard, soft, loose, etc.)

Start your treatment for IBS, focusing on making changes to your diet and lifestyle. See pages 5 to 13 for more information. Discuss diet changes with your dietitian to improve your tolerance to food. Being active and managing stress can help. So can physical therapy and counseling. If these do not help enough, or if your symptoms are severe, your doctor may recommend medicines.

Supplements that may help

These can help with IBS symptoms, but **talk to your doctor or dietitian before starting anything new.**

Fiber Supplements

- Fiber helps with digestion and regular bowel movements.
- The type of fiber you need depends on your symptoms. Discuss with your dietitian to choose the best option. See page 9 for more information.
- If your symptoms are strong or painful, be careful with fiber supplements.

Probiotics

- These are “good” bacteria that may help your gut.
- Research is still ongoing, so results may vary.
- If you want to try one, ask your doctor for advice.
- Try it for 4 to 6 weeks, then take a break to see if it helped.
- See page 10 for more information.

IBgard or FDgard

- These are capsules with peppermint oil.
- They may help relax your gut and reduce cramps or discomfort.
- You can take 1 to 3 capsules a day.

L-Glutamine

- This is a type of amino acid that may help with gut symptoms.
- You can try 5 grams, 3 times a day, for 6 to 8 weeks.

FODZYME

- This is an enzyme supplement that helps break down hard-to-digest carbohydrates called FODMAPs.
- It may help if you get bloated or gassy after eating certain foods.

Low FODMAP diet

A low FODMAP diet is a special eating plan that helps people with IBS feel better. FODMAPs (**F**ermentable **O**ligosaccharides, **D**isaccharides, **M**onosaccharides, and **P**olyols) are types of carbohydrates that some people cannot digest well. They can cause:

- Bloating
- Gas
- Stomach pain
- Changes in bathroom habits

How the Diet Works

This diet is a short-term eating plan to help find which foods bother your gut. There are 3 steps:

1. Elimination – Avoid all high FODMAP foods.
2. Reintroduction – Add them back one at a time.
3. Personalization – Keep track of which foods are okay for you.

If you do not feel better after 4 weeks, check for hidden FODMAPs in your food. If you are sure you have avoided them and still feel bad, this diet may not be right for you.

For more information, including how to make low FODMAP meals, read “Low FODMAP Diet” at go.osu.edu/pted3305.

Who Should NOT Follow the Low FODMAP Diet

Avoid this diet if you:

- Are losing weight without trying.
- Already have lots of food restrictions.
- Have or had an eating disorder.
- Are sick or have inflammation.
- Have challenges affording food.

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SIBO

Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth

SIBO happens when too many bacteria grow in your small intestine, which is not where they are supposed to be. These bacteria can cause problems like:

- Bloating
- Gas
- Stomach pain
- Diarrhea or constipation

Normally, your small intestine has very few bacteria. But with SIBO, bacteria from your large intestine move up and grow too much. This can mess up digestion and make you feel uncomfortable.

Doctors usually treat SIBO with antibiotics to reduce the bacteria, along with diet changes to help with symptoms and prevent it from coming back.

What can cause SIBO?

You may be more likely to get SIBO if:

- You have had stomach or belly surgery.
- You do not eat enough fiber.
- You eat too much processed food.
- You have trouble going to the bathroom (like constipation).
- You have been on multiple antibiotic courses for other health conditions.

What can you do?

To feel better and help your gut:

- Talk to your doctor about medicine to treat bacteria. This is the only way to get rid of SIBO.
- Try to have regular bowel movements.
- Improve your diet and lifestyle. See pages 5 to 13 for more information.

How food can help

Food can help control your symptoms, but medicine (usually antibiotics) is needed to treat SIBO. Eating the right foods can also help stop SIBO from coming back.

Sugar

- Bacteria love sugar and turn it into gas, which causes bloating.
- Limit added sugars to less than 10 grams per serving from sugary foods and drinks.
- Eat less than 1 cup of fruit at a time.

Fiber

- Fiber helps good bacteria grow and keeps your digestion healthy.
- Eat more fiber from veggies, fruits, beans, nuts, and whole grains.
- Mix different types of fiber for best results.
- If fiber bothers your stomach, adjust how much you eat. See page 9 for more information.
- Look for foods with at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.
- **The recommended daily fiber intake for adults is 25 to 38 grams.** How much fiber you need depends on your gender and overall health. Talk to your dietitian to learn how much fiber you need per day.

FODMAPs

FODMAPs are a group of sugars and fibers found in certain foods that can be hard for some people to digest. The word FODMAP stands for:

- Fermentable
- Oligosaccharides
- Disaccharides
- Monosaccharides
- And
- Polyols

These are types of carbohydrates that can cause gut discomfort for some people, like:

- Bloating
- Gas
- Stomach pain
- Diarrhea or constipation

Some foods high in FODMAPs include:

- Certain fruits (like apples, pears, watermelon)
- Vegetables (like onions, garlic, cauliflower)
- Dairy products (like milk, ice cream)
- Beans and lentils
- Sugar alcohols (like sorbitol, xylitol, mannitol)

Some people feel better when they eat a low FODMAP diet, which means avoiding or limiting these foods. This diet does not cure conditions like SIBO, but it can help reduce symptoms.

- You can try this diet while waiting for treatment.
- If the diet is too hard, ask your doctor or dietitian about taking FODZYME — a dietary supplement that helps to break down FODMAPs in your food.
- Some people with repeat SIBO find the low FODMAP diet helpful.
- See page 21 for more information about the low FODMAP diet.

Gastroparesis

Gastroparesis can happen when the nerves or muscles in the stomach do not work properly, causing the stomach to empty food more slowly than normal. This means food stays in the stomach too long, which can cause symptoms like:

- Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)
- Vomiting
- Feeling full too soon after starting to eat
- Bloating
- Unplanned weight loss

It is important to talk to your doctor if you have these symptoms often.

Diet tips to help

- Eat small meals (about 1 to 1½ cups) every 2 to 3 hours.
- Watch how much fiber you eat at one time. Adjust the amount if it causes discomfort.
- Change the texture of your meals:
 - Liquids like smoothies, shakes, and soups are often easier to digest than solid foods.
 - Add protein to liquid meals using:
 - Low fat dairy (like milk, yogurt)
 - Nut butter powder
 - Protein powder
 - Nonfat milk powder
- Limit fat, especially in one meal. Avoid greasy or fried foods.
- Drink fluids between meals, not during, to help digestion.
- Avoid carbonated drinks (like soda), which can make symptoms worse.

Other helpful tips

- Pay attention to how much fiber and fat your body can handle, and adjust as needed.
- Practice mindful eating — chew slowly and focus on your food. See page 5 for more information.
- Stay active with gentle movement:
 - Take walks after meals.
 - Try chair exercises or stretching.
- Keep your bowel movements regular, especially if you have constipation.

Diverticulosis

What is diverticulosis and diverticulitis?

- Sometimes, small pouches form in the wall of your colon (large intestine). These are called **diverticula**.
- Most of the time, these pouches are harmless and do not cause problems.
- If one or more of them gets swollen or infected, it is called **diverticulitis**.
- Diverticulitis can cause pain and may lead to more serious problems if not treated.

Tips for people with diverticulosis (no inflammation)

To help keep your gut healthy and avoid problems:

- Keep your bowel movements regular and avoid constipation. See pages 17 to 18 for more information.
- Eat high fiber foods like:
 - Fruits
 - Vegetables (including corn)
 - Whole grains
 - Legumes (beans and lentils)
 - Seeds and nuts
 - Popcorn
- Drink plenty of water every day
- Follow healthy eating habits. See page 8 for more information.

What to eat during a diverticulitis flare

If your diverticula become inflamed:

- Start with liquid meals that have protein, like:
 - Soups
 - Smoothies
 - Protein shakes
- Eat small portions throughout the day.
- When you feel better and your doctor approves advancing your diet, slowly add soft foods.
- Chew your food well and eat slowly with mindful eating. See page 5 for more information.
- Avoid rough parts of fruits and veggies (like skins, seeds, and roughage).
- Keep drinking lots of water.

IBD

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

IBD is a serious health condition where parts of your digestive system (like your stomach and intestines) get swollen and irritated, and can lead to more complications. This can cause belly pain, diarrhea, tiredness, and trouble eating certain foods.

There are 2 main types of IBD:

- **Crohn's disease:** Can affect any part of the digestive system, from the mouth to the end of the intestines.
- **Ulcerative colitis:** Only affects the large intestine (also called the colon).

IBD is different from regular stomach bugs — it lasts a long time and sometimes gets worse (called a **flare**) or better (called **remission**). Doctors help manage IBD with medicine, special diets, and healthy habits.

Eating tips for people with IBD

If you have IBD, your diet may change depending on how you are feeling. There are 3 phases:

1 — During a Flare (When Symptoms Are Bad)

- Eat soft foods like bananas, cooked vegetables, mashed potatoes, applesauce, or oatmeal.
- Eat small meals throughout the day.
- Make fiber easier to digest. See page 9 for more information.
- Try liquid meals like soups, smoothies, or shakes.
- Eat foods with protein like eggs, chicken, tofu, or protein drinks.
- Stay away from sugary snacks and drinks.
- Avoid greasy or fried foods.
- If milk or dairy makes you feel sick, try lactose-free options.
- Eat slowly and pay attention to how food makes you feel (mindful eating). See page 5 for more information.
- Drink plenty of water. You can also try drinks that help with hydration. See page 11 for more information.

2 — Transitioning Out of a Flare (Starting to Feel Better)

- Keep following the tips from the flare phase.
- Slowly add soft solid foods (like steamed carrots, soft pasta).
- If your belly still hurts, but tests show you are getting better, talk to a dietitian about trying a special diet called low FODMAP.

3 — During Remission (Feeling Good)

- Slowly add more foods to your diet.
- Keep practicing mindful eating.
- Eat foods with fiber (like fruits, veggies, legumes, whole grains) and protein (like lean meat, beans, eggs).
- Follow healthy eating habits to help prevent another flare. See page 8 for more information.

Long-term tips for managing IBD

If You Have Crohn's Disease, Focus on the Following:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- If your intestines are narrow, eat soft or blended foods.
- Eat less red meat (like beef, pork), processed meat (like bacon, sausage), and saturated and trans fats.

If You Have Ulcerative Colitis, Focus on the Following:

- Eat foods with omega-3 fats like:
 - Fatty fish (like salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines, trout)
 - Seeds (like chia, flax, hemp)
 - Nuts (like walnuts, cashews, macadamias, pistachios, pine nuts, Brazil nuts, pecans, hazelnuts)
 - Avocado
- Avoid red meats, processed meats, and saturated and trans fats from dairy, palm oil, and coconut oil.

Common foods that may cause problems

Try to avoid these if they bother your stomach:

- Sugars and sugar alcohols (like sorbitol, xylitol, mannitol)
- Spicy foods
- Dairy with lactose (like milk, ice cream, cottage cheese, ricotta, yogurt)
 - Lower lactose dairy: Greek yogurt and hard cheese (like cheddar, Parmesan)
- Raw veggies, skins on fruits and veggies, and bran
- Caffeine (like coffee, soda)
- Alcohol
- Fried or greasy foods
- Red meats (like beef, pork, lamb) and processed meats (like sausage, bacon, bologna)
- Additives, emulsifiers, and thickeners in packaged foods (like carrageenan, maltodextrin, polysorbate 80, carboxymethylcellulose, titanium dioxide)

Note: It is important to talk to your doctor for a treatment plan that works best for you.



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