



## DIETETICS

## IBS in children: Symptoms & Triggers

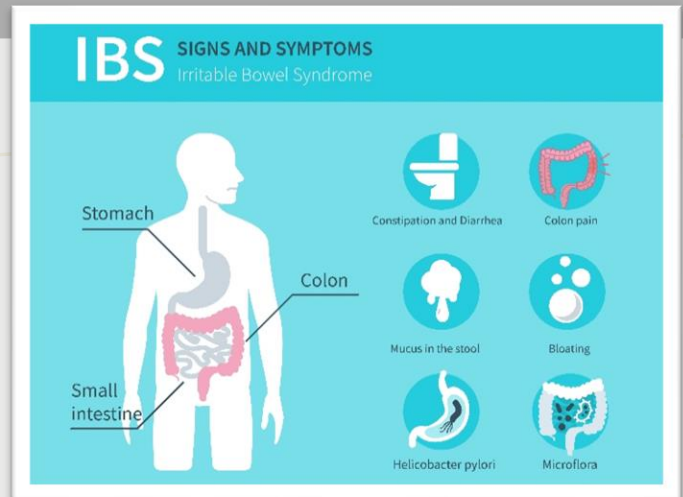
By Lauren Goffredo, OSCAR Care Group Dietitian

### What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (more commonly known as IBS) is a condition of the digestive system. It is a very common, chronic (long term) condition that arises when the large bowel is not working as good as it should – whether that be from poor gut motility (the stretching of the bowel muscles) or high sensitivity. Unfortunately, there is no cure for IBS; however, with some diet and lifestyle modification, you can learn to manage and relieve your symptoms and continue to live a healthy life.

### Who is affected by IBS? Is my child at risk?

IBS can effect men and women of all ages at any stage of their life. Research has shown that up to 20% of children and young adults are affected by IBS, with boys and girls equally effected. There is no known cause for the development of IBS but a child is more likely to develop it if one or both of their parents has it. Children who are highly stressed, bacterial imbalances in the bowel, having a highly sensitive bowel and even food sensitivities are all potential risk factors for development.

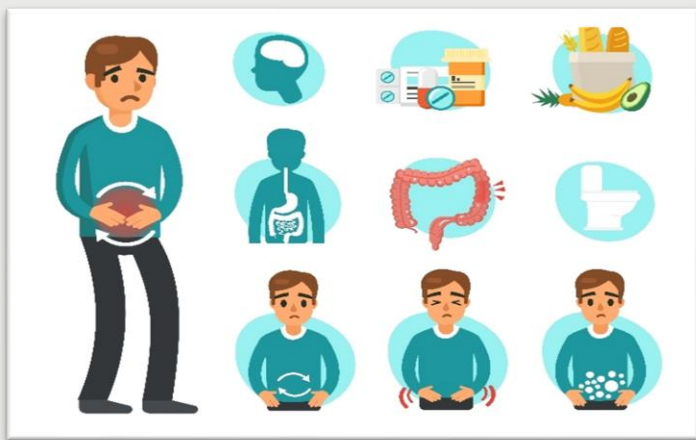


### What are the complications of IBS in children?

IBS may make a child feel very unwell. Although it is a physical condition, IBS does not just affect a child's physical health; quite often it can result in negative impacts on social, emotional and mental health too.

Feelings of embarrassment, depression and anxiety are common. For example, if your child is frequently needing to rush to use the bathroom, they might get scared about going out to school or events and avoid it completely which can make them feel isolated.

If your child is feeling unwell after eating food and feels that the only way they can avoid that is to not eat, this can lead to weight loss and potentially implicate their growth and development.



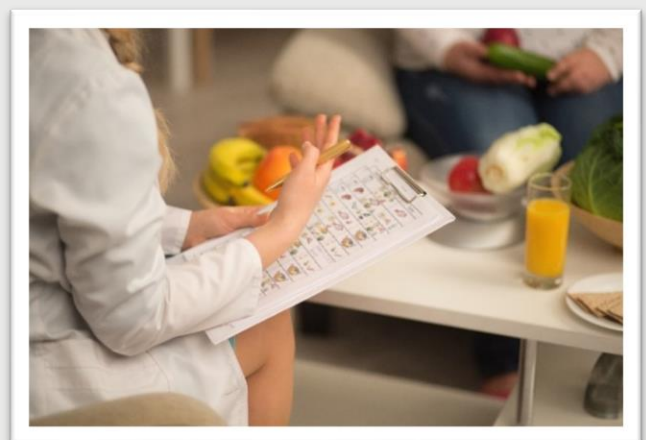
### What are the symptoms to look out for?

Symptoms of IBS vary from child to child. Your child may have one or multiple symptoms, they may come and go and often they can be painful.

Things to look out for include:

- Diarrhoea or constipation – usually a child will have one or the other, but it is not uncommon for them to have changes in bowel habits. Diarrhoea or constipation can come and go or be chronic (long term)
- Pain and or cramping in the abdomen
- Gas (passing wind frequently or feeling like it is trapped inside)
- Feeling sick (nausea)
- Bloating (having a protruding belly, puffiness)
- Loss of appetite and reduced food intake
- Urgency to use the bowel or feeling like not all of the stool has come out during a bowel movement
- Feeling full quickly
- Mucous in the stool

**Unintentional weight loss** (losing weight without trying) is a more severe symptoms of IBS that can cause ongoing health complications and risks to your child's growth and development. It is important that if your child is losing weight without trying that you seek medical advice.



### My child may have IBS. Who should I speak to and how is it diagnosed?

IBS is complicated and is diagnosed through ruling out other health conditions. Your GP will take a full history of your child's health and may follow up with a range of scans and tests. If you are concerned your child may have IBS, consult your healthcare professional.

Your GP may include an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) in the care of your child to help identify foods and nutrients that may be involved.

### What are the treatment options for IBS?

As mentioned previously, there is no cure for IBS; however, symptoms can be managed. Your GP and healthcare providers will draw up a specialised treatment plan based on your child's history, the extent of their condition and the results found in their diagnostic tests.

Common treatments include diet changes, medication, stress management techniques. If extensive diet therapy is needed an APD will be able to help you and your child eliminate all trigger foods from the diet whilst ensuring they are having a healthy, balanced diet which will promote good health and growth.



## Fermentable

Process through which gut bacteria ferment undigested carbohydrate to produce gases.



## Oligosaccharides

Fructans & GOS - found in foods such as wheat, rye, onions, garlic and legumes/pulses.



## Disaccharides

Lactose - found in dairy products like milk, soft cheeses and yogurts.



## Monosaccharides

Fructose - found in honey, apples, high fructose corn syrups, etc.



And

## Polyols

Sorbitol and Mannitol - Found in some fruit and vegetables and used as artificial sweeteners.



### What role does food have in IBS? What are some common triggers I should avoid?

There are some foods that can trigger or irritate IBS – these foods are known as FODMAPs.

Researchers and APD's at Monash University in Victoria have identified FODMAPs to be a group of foods that are poorly absorbed or hard to digest which can result in symptoms of IBS.

FODMAPs are carbohydrates (sugars) found in many different fruits, vegetables, grain and dairy products and artificial sweeteners. A child may be sensitive to one FODMAP or they may have trigger foods in different categories.

The best way to find out is to trial a low FODMAP diet plan. On this diet, your child will need to eliminate ALL high FODMAP foods until their symptoms go away – usually for 4–6 weeks.

They then can reintroduce FODMAP foods one at a time to be able to find out which FODMAPs trigger their symptoms and which are ok for them to eat. A diet plan that avoids all FODMAP triggering foods can then be put in place.

All phases of the low FODMAPs diet should only be undertaken alongside the strict guidance of an APD to ensure the diet is nutritionally adequate.



### Common triggers may include:

- Cows milk and their products – it is not advised to remove these foods from the diet without advice from an APD
- Caffeine
- Artificial sweeteners
- High fat foods or a fatty meal (e.g. deep fried foods, takeaway)
- Large meal size
- Spicy food

### What about probiotics?

Probiotics are live bacteria that can create health benefits when taken in the right dosage. There are many different types of probiotic supplements available including powdered, capsule and liquid supplements as well as naturally occurring probiotics found in yoghurt, fermented yoghurt drinks and fermented foods. While there is no sound evidence to support the role of probiotics in IBS, probiotics are safe and, in some research, have been found to be effective in relieving and managing symptoms. There are no recommendations as to which probiotics to use; therefore, it may be useful to speak with your GP to find one that is right for your child.



## HIGH FODMAP FOODS AND

Vegetables	Artichoke, asparagus, cauliflower, garlic, green peas, mushrooms, onion, sugar snap peas
Fruits	Apples, apple juice, cherries, dried fruit, mango, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, watermelon
Dairy and alternatives	Cow's milk, custard, evaporated milk, ice cream, soy milk (made from whole soybeans), sweetened condensed milk, yoghurt
Protein sources	Most legumes/pulses, some marinated meats/poultry/seafood, some processed meats
Breads and cereal products	Wheat/rye/barley based breads, breakfast cereals, biscuits and snack products
Sugars/ sweeteners & confectionery	High fructose corn syrup, honey, sugar free confectionery
Nuts and seeds	Cashews, pistachios

## LOW FODMAP ALTERNATIVES

Aubergine/eggplant, bean(green), bok choy, capsicum (bell pepper), carrot, cucumber, lettuce, potato, tomato, zucchini
Cantaloupe, grapes, kiwi fruit (green), mandarin, orange, pineapple, strawberries
Almond milk, brie/camembert cheese, feta cheese, hard cheeses, lactose-free milk, soy milk (made from soy protein)
Eggs, firm tofu, plain cooked meats/poultry/seafood, tempeh
Corn flakes, oats, quinoa flakes, quinoa/rice/corn pasta, rice cakes (plain), sourdough spelt bread, wheat/rye/barley free breads
Dark chocolate, maple syrup, rice malt syrup, table sugar
Macadamias, peanuts, pumpkin seeds, walnuts

### Where can I go for further information?

For more information about IBS in children or the Low FODMAP diet, speak to your healthcare professional, APD or check out the Monash Uni FODMAPs website or download the app:

<https://www.monashfodmap.com/>

### May is Crohn's & Colitis Awareness Month

This May Crohn's & Colitis Australia celebrates 35 years of support for people living with inflammatory bowel disease.



### Need help with creating a well-balanced diet or IBS information?

This article was written by OSCAR Care Group Dietitian, Lauren Goffredo. Please call or email via our contact details below.

#### Resources:

<https://www.monashfodmap.com/>  
<https://www.monashfodmap.com/about-fodmap-and-ibs/>  
[https://www.monashfodmap.com/3\\_step\\_fodmap\\_diet/](https://www.monashfodmap.com/3_step_fodmap_diet/)  
<https://daa.asn.au/smart-eating-for-you/smart-eating-fast-facts/medical/a-guide-to-irritable-bowel-syndrome/>  
<https://daa.asn.au/smart-eating-for-you/smart-eating-fast-facts/medical/fodmaps-and-ibs-whats-the-deal/>  
<https://www.gesa.org.au/public/13/files/Consumer%20Information/IBS%203rd%20Ed.pdf>  
<https://www.chop.edu/conditions-diseases/irritable-bowel-syndrome-children>  
<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?contenttypeid=90&contentid=p01983>  
<https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=irritable-bowel-syndrome-in-children-90-P01983>  
<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/ibs.html>

