



BODY

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& SUE FULLER

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common condition affecting 10-15% of the population, with twice as many women as men are affected.

The symptoms are:

- abdominal discomfort or pain
- altered bowel habit
- bloating and flatulence

The discomfort is relieved with the passing of wind or stool. And the altered bowel habit is either diarrhoea or constipation, or a fluctuation between the two.

The causes of IBS are not known. It is likely that there are several different types of IBS, and consequently there may be several different causes.

The current explanations are:

- stress and the mind influence the gut
- the immune system is overactive
- the gut bacteria have been disturbed

Dietary support

There are two main dietary treatments for IBS: fibre and probiotics.

Dietary fibre of the right type can relieve symptoms. Put simply, soluble fibre is more helpful than insoluble fibre. In fact, insoluble fibre (in the form of bran) may even worsen IBS symptoms in some people. The type of soluble fibre most frequently used is psyllium (also known as ispaghula). The one drawback with soluble fibre is that it can promote gas production, but this can be avoided by taking a low dose initially, and gradually increasing it to the amount recommended in the product.

In the intestine, psyllium absorbs water and forms a gel. In constipated-IBS, the extra bulk stimulates the movement of gut contents, and in diarrhoea-IBS, excess water in the intestine is taken up by the psyllium.

A recent review of the 19 studies of the use of probiotics (friendly microbes) in IBS found that 15 reported an improvement in IBS symptoms, with the latest studies being more effective. Probiotic microbes can help normalise a disturbed microflora and balance the immune system, and these may be the main ways in which they help reduce IBS.



PETER CARTWRIGHT

HE HAS 17 YEARS' EXPERIENCE OF WORKING FOR PATIENT AND SELF-HELP ASSOCIATIONS INCLUDING THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COLITIS AND CROHN'S DISEASE. PETER HAS AN MSc IN MICROBIOLOGY, A BSc IN BIOMEDICINE AND AN MA IN SOCIOLOGY, AND IS THE AUTHOR OF FOUR BOOKS.

YOGA FOR IBS

Yoga postures that twist, compress and stretch the torso will provide a massage to the digestive organs and enhance their functions. These postures when practised regularly by those who suffer from IBS can provide a natural form of relief for many of the symptoms, and they can also reduce the intensity and frequency of outbreaks.

Here are a few simple postures to include as part of your daily routine:

JATHARA PARIVRTTASANA (SPINAL TWIST) – will gently stretch and massage the intestines, helping move waste through the body.

MAJARYASANA (CAT) – will gently stretch and compress the torso, massaging the digestive system.

Apanasana (Wind Relief) – will do just that!

Starting the day with a simple Surya Namaskar (Sun salutation) will wake up the digestive system and remove any stagnant energy that has accumulated overnight, whilst the body lay relatively still. Amongst many other things, muscular contractions also help to remove waste and eliminate toxins from the body.

Make sure you sit with a straight spine during and immediately after eating, as this will aid digestion – just imagine what happens to all of those organs inside the torso when you slouch. Yoga has an extremely positive effect on posture and alignment.

As stress is considered to be one of the triggers of IBS, yoga will help reduce stress levels and provide you with a multitude of techniques to help you remain calm when you find yourself presented with challenging circumstances.

Eating habits begin to change for many regular yoga practitioners, which will have a very positive effect on overall health, including the bowels.

As yoga raises levels of health and vitality, practitioners usually feel well and happy, and this positive disposition will have an impact on the intensity of outbreaks, and the symptoms experienced.

JATHARA
PARIVRTTASANA
(SPINAL TWIST)



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SUE FULLER

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MAJARYASANA
(CAT)



APANASANA
(WIND RELIEF)

