



# FOOD



## THE IRRITABLE BOWEL SOLUTION



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# THE IRRITABLE BOWEL SOLUTION

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# THE IRRITABLE BOWEL SOLUTION: THE PROBLEM

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a huge problem that affects about 10 to 23 percent of people worldwide, and between 15 and 20 percent of Americans.

In other words, almost one in five people suffer unnecessarily from something that can often be easily addressed by focusing on the root causes using Functional Medicine.

Not surprisingly, IBS is one of the most common reasons for visits to the doctor—accounting for over three million doctor visits annually. And its annual cost is two billion dollars in lost productivity and health care costs. Unfortunately, most doctors have no clue how to treat it or what's really causing it. That's where Functional Medicine comes in.

Functional Medicine is not a new treatment or test or modality. It's a whole new way of thinking about solving the puzzle of chronic symptoms and diseases. IBS provides a fantastic model for illustrating how Functional Medicine works.

IBS is the label that doctors lump symptoms like bloating or gas, distention, constipation, diarrhea, and cramping under. Like its name suggests, IBS occurs when your bowel becomes irritable. But, when you look at your colon during a colonoscopy, you don't really see anything. It looks normal. There is no structural problem, no tumor, no obvious cause. The root problem is dysfunction in your gut ecosystem. Most doctors often suggest eating more fiber or taking Metamucil, but that's generally not very effective.

IBS causes needless misery for millions of people. Fortunately, it is entirely fixable if viewed through the lens of Functional Medicine.

## WHAT CAUSES IBS?

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In Functional Medicine, we focus on getting to the root cause of disease. But, we also know that one disease can have many causes (or that one cause can create many diseases—like gluten). If you have 10 people with IBS, for example, the causes may be quite different for each person.

There are really only five causes of all disease: Allergens, toxins, poor diet, stress, and microbes or an imbalance of the bugs in your gut. All of these can trigger symptoms and create thousands of diseases.

Once you identify the cause of your irritable bowel, you can get rid of it once and for all. It's extraordinary how simple it is once we know the right thing to do.

# THE IRRITABLE BOWEL SOLUTION: THE PROBLEM

There's a funny joke I always tell about how important it is to know what to do. One patient got his appendix out and the doctor sent him a bill for \$1,000. The patient said, "Wow! That's lot of money for such a simple operation." The doctor replied, "You're right." And he sent him another bill: \$1 for taking out the appendix; \$999 for knowing what needed to be taken out.

Functional Medicine is sort of like that. We know exactly what to do by treating the system—not the symptoms.

## HOW FOOD ALLERGIES OR SENSITIVITIES CAN LEAD TO IBS

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Certain foods can irritate your bowel and digestive system. I'm talking about food sensitivities; not a true allergy like a peanut or shellfish allergy, but rather a mild food sensitivity that can cause terrible symptoms.

Food sensitivities are very common, and the most widespread thing in food that people react to is gluten. That's the protein found in wheat, barley, rye, and spelt. It's a very common reaction even if you don't have celiac disease, which is a full-blown autoimmune reaction to gluten. Even if your doctor tells you that your test results for gluten antibodies or celiac are normal, you can still have a severe reaction to gluten.

Dairy is another big problem. About 75 percent of people can't digest the lactose in dairy, which results in bloating, gas, and diarrhea. Even if you don't have lactose intolerance, dairy can create problems. Dairy contains proteins, such as casein and whey, that can cause irritation and inflammation in your gut.

There are many, many other foods people can have reactions to, including soy, corn, and eggs.

A landmark paper, published in the prestigious British medical journal *Gut*, found that eliminating foods identified through delayed food allergy testing (IgG antibodies) resulted in dramatic improvements in IBS symptoms.<sup>1</sup> Another article, an editorial in *The American Journal of Gastroenterology*, stated clearly that we must respect and recognize the role of food allergies and inflammation in IBS.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW GUT IMBALANCES CAN LEAD TO IBS

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Imbalances in your gut ecosystem can also trigger or exacerbate IBS. You have an enormous ecosystem of bugs in there with about 500 species in all. In fact, 100 trillion bacterial cells exist within your gut ecosystem. There are 10 times as many bacterial cells as there are your own cells. That makes us only about 10 percent human, if you think about it!

We call this collection of bugs the human microbiome, and these bugs have to be in balance for you to be healthy. If you have bad bugs growing or a yeast overgrowth, or if you have parasites or worms, you can get IBS.

Bad bugs in the wrong spot can also create problems. Most bacteria are in your large intestine, but sometimes they move up and go into the small intestine. That's not very good, because the small intestine should be sterile.

# THE IRRITABLE BOWEL SOLUTION: THE PROBLEM

When you eat food that's starchy like bread, cereal, pasta, rice, or sugary food, the bacteria ferment the sugars in the food. It's like the way apple cider blows up in a plastic container in your fridge when it goes bad. That's what happens in your gut.

The bacteria ferment the sugars in the food you eat, and your stomach blows up. That's why you get bloating right after meals.

That's a very common symptom of bacterial overgrowth, or what we used to call small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO). It's a very easy thing to treat if you use the right modality, but most doctors never diagnose or treat this properly.

SIBO can be diagnosed by a breath test, which measures gas production by the bacteria, or by a urine test that measures the byproducts of the bacteria after they are absorbed into your system.

Bacterial overgrowth is a real syndrome and was described in a review paper published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.<sup>3</sup> And, a major paper was published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* that showed using a nonabsorbed antibiotic called rifaximin (Xifaxan) for 10 days resulted in a dramatic improvement in bloating and overall symptoms of IBS by clearing out the overgrowth of bacteria.<sup>4</sup>

Yeast overgrowth is also common in your gut. It's sort of like a garden where the weeds take over. Yeast overgrowth happens because of taking antibiotics, steroids, birth control pills, or acid-blocking drugs. It also occurs if you eat a lot of sugar, drink alcohol, or are diabetic.

Yeast overgrowth can be treated with an antifungal, such as Diflucan, Nystatin, or Sporanox. Antifungal herbs, such as oregano, can also be effective to reboot your gut.

I'm not a big fan of medication, but sometimes for irritable bowel, a good nonabsorbed antibiotic like the aforementioned Xifaxan will clear out the SIBO (bacterial overgrowth) and stop bloating and diarrhea. Using Xifaxan and an antifungal is almost like hitting the reset button on your computer; you reboot your gut and then you start over.

## OTHER CAUSES OF IBS

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As I've noted, there are two main causes of irritable bowel—food allergies and overgrowth of bacteria in the small intestine—but there may be others, including a lack of digestive enzymes, zinc, or magnesium; parasites living in the gut; heavy metal toxicity, and more.

This is precisely why it is so critically important to personalize treatment based on the unique circumstances that exist for each person who suffers from IBS—the solution is most certainly not one-size-fits-all. But solutions can be found if we look carefully at the underlying causes and treat them.

# THE IRRITABLE BOWEL SOLUTION: THE SOLUTION

The key to healing IBS and fixing your gut is to reboot your gut by getting rid of the bad stuff and putting in the good stuff.

To heal your gut, first we remove the bad stuff (bad bugs, yeast, parasites, worms, food sensitivities) and then replace the things that are missing (enzymes, prebiotics from fiber). We re-inoculate with healthy bacteria (probiotics) and we repair the gut with the right nutrients.

We talked about getting rid of the bad stuff (namely, food sensitivities and bugs). Now, we have to add in the good stuff.

While your gut is healing, it's a good idea to add digestive enzymes to help break down the food. You may need those for two or three months.

Then, you need to re-inoculate your gut with healthy bacteria using probiotics such as *bifidobacteria*, *lactobacillus*, and other strains of bacteria. They help to repopulate the healthy gut flora and allow your digestion to work better. You can also eat probiotic-rich foods like kimchi, kombucha, miso, or sauerkraut. These are all fermented foods that help your gut flora get and stay healthy.

Vitamin A, zinc, omega-3 fats (fish oil), evening primrose oil, and glutamine all help repair the gut. We also use herbs like quercetin and turmeric to reduce inflammation and heal a leaky gut.

Normally, your intestinal cells are stuck together like Legos. A leaky gut occurs when the gut lining is interrupted. When the intestinal cells come apart or separate, food proteins and bacteria leak in and they start causing inflammation.

Leaky gut can create IBS but also joint pain, fatigue, cognitive problems, depression, allergies, congestion, and rashes like eczema. Many symptoms and diseases are caused by leaky gut.

In Functional Medicine, the gut is one of the most important systems to focus on and to get working well, because that's the seat of your health. It's connected to everything else.

## THE 10-DAY DETOX DIET

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The first step to curb inflammation, heal your gut, and feel better is to eliminate the junk. It's simple. First, you stop eating certain addictive and inflammatory foods for 10 days, and then, after 10 days, you'll have the opportunity to add some of these foods back in to see how your body responds.

Eliminating inflammatory and toxic foods that trigger or exacerbate problems like IBS is just part of the 10-Day Detox Diet. The other part involves adding in the good stuff—real, whole foods that nourish your body with every single bite. We all know that food can harm us, but we should all take advantage of the fact that food can heal us, too.

# THE IRRITABLE BOWEL SOLUTION: THE SOLUTION

Here are some ways you will automatically improve IBS just by following The 10-Day Detox Diet:

- **Eat a plant-based diet** rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds high in fiber, healthy fats, and nutrients.
- **Don't eat carbohydrates alone.** Combine protein, fat, and carbohydrates in every meal.
- **Pull the sugar.** A diet full of empty calories and quickly absorbed sugar, liquid sugar calories, and refined carbohydrates—all of which convert to sugar—creates high insulin levels, eventually leading to insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. Chronically high insulin levels lead to many problems, including inflammation, high blood pressure, poor sex drive, increased risk for cancer, and depression.
- **Eat fat.** Use ONLY good, healthy fats and clean (grass-fed or sustainably raised) animal foods. You should include fat at each meal. The best sources are avocados, extra-virgin olive oil, nuts and seeds, extra-virgin coconut butter, organic full-fat coconut milk, whole organic eggs, fatty fish (sardines, wild salmon, mackerel, or herring), grass-fed lamb, bison, or beef, or organic poultry.
- **Stock up on real foods.** Whole, unprocessed, real foods heal your gut, reduce inflammation and oxidative stress, and improve your liver detoxification to prevent or reverse insulin resistance and diabetes. Whole, real foods turn on all the right gene messages, promote a healthy metabolism, reverse insulin resistance and diabetes, and prevent aging and age-related diseases like diabetes and heart disease.
- **Eat about 4 to 6 ounces of protein with each meal.** If you make a fist, that's approximately portion size we're talking about per meal.
- **Focus on gut-healing foods like prebiotic foods** (raw Jerusalem artichoke and dandelion greens are good choices) and fermented and cultured foods like kimchi and sauerkraut.
- **Avoid all gluten and dairy.**
- **Avoid all processed junk food,** including sodas, juices, and diet drinks, which impact sugar and lipid metabolism. Liquid sugar calories are the biggest contributors to obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.
- **Eliminate all hydrogenated fat,** which is found in margarine, shortening, and processed oils, as well as many baked goods and processed foods.
- **Eat only fat, protein, and veggies for breakfast.** You can choose from a variety of protein shakes or delicious egg recipes (omega-3 eggs are ideal) to wake up your metabolism first thing in the morning.
- **Include flaxseeds** by adding two to four tablespoons of ground flaxseeds every day. Flax is tasty in shakes or sprinkled on salads.



# THE IRRITABLE BOWEL SOLUTION: THE SOLUTION

- **Avoid beans and grains.**
- **Limit alcohol consumption.** Drinking too much alcohol can interfere with a healthy gut and good health. For men, limit alcohol to no more than two drinks per day. For women, limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day. (One drink is defined as a 12-ounce beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine, or a 1.5-ounce shot of liquor.)
- **Drink a minimum of 8 glasses of pure, clean water** throughout the day.
- **Eat the rainbow.** Eat at least eight to 10 servings of vegetables every day, which contain disease-fighting vitamins, minerals, fiber, phytonutrients, antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory molecules.
- **Use Himalayan or pure sea salt,** because when you cut down carbs your body needs more salt.
- **Try not to eat three hours before bed.**

The 10-Day Detox Diet naturally reduces inflammation because it removes these foods that create harm and increases all of the wonderful anti-inflammatory nutrients your body needs using whole foods to heal your gut.

I've provided more details about the 10-Day Detox Diet and how to re-introduce foods to maintain that plan for life in *Food: What the Heck Do I Eat?*

This book is founded on the principle that food is medicine. It is information. Food literally controls almost every function of your body and mind. And it connects almost everything that matters in our lives.

Food connects us to one another and to our bodies; it can reinvigorate our health, bring families together, restore vibrant communities, improve the economy and the environment, reduce pollution, and help our kids get better grades and avoid eating disorders, obesity, and drug abuse. Food can even reduce poverty, violence, homicide, and suicide.

I wrote *Food* as a roadmap, based on the best and latest science of what to eat, to dispel the confusion and contention that keeps you overweight, sick, and unhappy.

What you put on your fork is the most important thing you do every day. It influences your capacity to live a rich, energetic, connected, soulful life—a life in which you have the energy to care for yourself, to love your friends and family, to help your neighbor, to fully show up for your work in the world, and to live your dreams.

If you enjoy real, whole, fresh foods that you cook using real ingredients, you are positively affecting everything around you.

## SUPPLEMENTS

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Supplements are important. Along with a healthy diet and exercise program, they can dramatically reduce your IBS.

I have sourced the highest-quality supplements that are tested for purity and potency and are all absorbable and free of contaminants and allergens. You can get all of the recommended supplements bundled together in my online store. Look for [The Healthy Digestive Support Kit](#).

### This kit includes:

- **PhytoMulti Multivitamin by Metagenics** (two tablets a day with food).
- **OmegaGenics EPA-DHA 720 fish oil** (two softgels a day with food).
- **CandiBactin-BR** (two capsules three times a day for a month) for cleaning out bacterial overgrowth.
- **CandiBactin-AR** (two capsules three times a day for a month) for yeast overgrowth.
- **Enzyme Complete Isogest 2 Digestive Enzymes** (two capsules with each meal for two to four months).
- **Ther-Biotic Complete High-Potency Probiotic** (two capsules twice a day).
- **Gut-healing nutrients: GI Revive by Designs for Health** (one teaspoon in water once or twice a day) **or GI Integrity by Pure Encapsulations** (four capsules twice a day).
- If you are constipated (not having one or two normal bowel movements a day) take **Magnesium Citrate by Pure Encapsulations** (two capsules, twice a day). If you need more, you can increase the dose until you have daily bowel movements. If you take too much, you will get loose stools so just take less. And, if you have kidney failure, ask your doctor first before using magnesium.
- **You should also consider testing for food sensitivities and for stool issues** (again, see the “How to Work with Your Doctor to Get What You Need” guide for more information). Consider Cyrex 3 testing for gluten sensitivity when conventional tests for gluten are negative. You may also consider Cyrex 4 testing for gluten-associated cross-reactive foods and Cyrex 10 testing for a broader food sensitivity panel. This can reveal other unexpected triggers such as eggs, certain vegetables, or even spices.

By following this approach, most people can heal their irritable bowel. If you are not getting better utilizing these strategies, you may need medical help.

You may need treatment for SIBO or bacterial overgrowth. Talk to your doctor about Xifaxan (a non-absorbed antibiotic) for bacterial overgrowth, 550 mg twice a day for 10 days; and Diflucan, 100 mg a day for three to four weeks, to kill the yeast. Your doctor must prescribe these medications.

In some cases, treatment for parasites or worms is needed based on the testing.

## EXERCISE

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Exercise is not a luxury. It's a necessity when it comes to preventing almost all chronic disease, from heart disease to cancer, from dementia to diabetes, from osteoporosis to osteoarthritis. You cannot age successfully without it. It is simply how we are designed.

I encourage 30 to 45 minutes of cardiovascular exercise at least six times a week. You may try interval training if you are feeling stronger. I also encourage strength training to build muscle and reduce body fat composition.

## REDUCE STRESS

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Stress alone can cause many chronic diseases and exacerbate gut issues like IBS. Finding ways to manage stress and to relax is essential for dealing with nearly all chronic health conditions, including irritable bowel disease.

Learn to reduce stress by doing regular relaxation exercises such as yoga, tai chi, meditation, breathing, guided imagery, or whatever it takes to engage the relaxation nervous system, which can lower your inflammation and reduce symptoms associated with IBS.

Try classes, buy CDs (you can try my [UltraCalm audio program](#)), try therapy, or just go out and have fun. Do whatever it takes to hit the pause button on a daily basis and maintain your health.

## SLEEP

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I used to think that “MD” stood for “medical deity” and meant I didn't have to follow the same sleep rules as every other human being. I stayed up late working long shifts in the emergency room, ignoring the demands of my body. It wasn't until I learned that shift work leads to a shortened life expectancy that I quit.

Unfortunately, our lives are infiltrated with constant stimuli that keep us revved up until the moment we go to bed. It's no wonder so many of us have trouble getting restful sleep.

Instead of pushing through until your head hits the pillow, try to take a little “holiday” in the two hours before bed. Create a sleep ritual—a special set of little things you do before bed—in order to guide your body into a deep, healing sleep.

# THE IRRITABLE BOWEL SOLUTION: THE SOLUTION

HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW TO RESTORE YOUR NATURAL SLEEP RHYTHM. IT MAY TAKE WEEKS OR MONTHS, BUT USING THESE TOOLS IN A COORDINATED WAY WILL EVENTUALLY RESET YOUR BIOLOGICAL RHYTHMS:

- **Practice the regular rhythms of sleep.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- **Use your bed for sleep and romance only,** not for television or even reading.
- **Create an aesthetic environment that encourages sleep.** Use serene and restful colors and eliminate clutter and distraction.
- **Create total darkness and quiet.** Consider using eyeshades and earplugs.
- **Avoid caffeine.**
- **Avoid alcohol.** It may help you get to sleep initially, but it causes interruptions throughout the night, resulting in poor-quality sleep.
- **Get at least 20-minutes exposure to daylight daily.** The light from the sun enters your eyes and triggers your brain to release specific chemicals and hormones like melatonin that are vital to healthy sleep, mood, and aging.
- **Eat no later than three hours before bed.** Eating a heavy meal prior to bed will lead to a bad night's sleep.
- **Don't exercise vigorously after dinner.** It excites the body and makes it more difficult to get to sleep.
- **Write your worries down.** One hour before bed, write down the things that are causing you anxiety and make your to-do list for the next day to reduce your worry. It will free up your mind and energy to move into deep and restful sleep.
- **Take a hot salt/soda aromatherapy bath.** Raising your body temperature before bed helps to induce sleep. A hot bath also relaxes your muscles and reduces tension physically and psychically. By adding 1 to 1½ cups Epsom salt (magnesium sulfate) and 1 to 1½ cups baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) to your bath, you will gain the benefits of magnesium absorbed through your skin and the alkaline-balancing effects of the baking soda, both of which help with sleep.
- **Get a massage or stretch before bed.** This helps relax the body, making it easier to fall asleep.
- **Warm your middle.** This raises your core temperature and helps trigger the proper chemistry for sleep. A hot-water bottle, heating pad, or a warm body can do the trick.
- **Avoid medications that interfere with sleep.** These include sedatives (which are used to treat insomnia, but ultimately lead to dependence and disruption of normal sleep rhythms), antihistamines, stimulants, cold medication, steroids, and headache medications that contain caffeine.
- **Use herbal therapies.** Try 200 mg of passion flower, or 320 mg to 480 mg of valerian root extract, standardized to 0.2 percent valerenic acid, one hour before bed.
- **Take 200 mg to 400 mg of magnesium citrate or glycinate before bed.** This relaxes the nervous system and muscles.
- **Other supplements and herbs can be helpful in getting some shuteye.** Try calcium, theanine (an amino acid from green tea), GABA, 5-HTP, and magnolia. (I like a product called Kavinace UltraPM that has a form of GABA, melatonin, and 5-HTP all in one. It works well for many of my patients.)
- **Try 1 mg to 3 mg of melatonin at night,** which can help stabilize your sleep rhythms.
- **Get a relaxation, meditation, or guided imagery CD.** Any of these may help you get to sleep.

## CONCLUSION

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We have the science, the understanding, and the tools to deal with this chronic problem and the suffering it causes one in five people. There is no need to wait for any more studies. I have been treating IBS in my practice for over 15 years with dramatic success.

In fact, just recently, one of my patients told me that for the first time in his life he didn't have any more stomach pains or digestive problems. It had previously been so bad that he had to have a phone installed in his bathroom!

By taking these steps and seeking out the underlying causes of IBS, you can dramatically improve your health and overcome your digestive disorder.

If you are willing to tweak your diet and lifestyle and take a few supplements, your health may change dramatically—and so will your life.

Even armed with these strategies, finding the right foods to heal your gut can sometimes feel confusing. That's why I wrote *Food: What the Heck Should I Eat?*, to help you undo all the beliefs about food that are making you fat and sick and replace them with a new understanding that will lead to health and longevity.

I believe that cultivating and consuming real, whole food is the answer to many of our world's problems. How we grow it, produce it, and eat it affects almost every aspect of our lives and our society. *Food* is an honest how-to guide designed to answer the question, "What the heck should I eat?"

Food is the doorway to living well and loving well—and to fixing much of what's wrong with our world. You have the power to heal your gut, starting with your very next meal.

If you have tried the 10-Day Detox Diet for up to 40 days and are still not completely better, then you should seek out a Functional Medicine practitioner. You can come see one of my Functional Medicine doctors at [The UltraWellness Center](#) or at the [Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine](#), where we treat people from all over the world. You can also find a trained practitioner near you through the [Institute for Functional Medicine](#).

The answers are right in front of you. Treat the underlying causes of your illness, and you will begin to experience vibrant health once more.

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