

A High-Five for High Fiber

Q. I am a 34-year-old mom with three active children, and I have irritable bowel syndrome. Help!

–K.W., Richmond, Va.

A. Irritable bowel, or “spastic colon,” is usually a “diagnosis of exclusion”—meaning when a physician rules out cancer, infectious diseases, inflammatory bowel diseases, malabsorptive diseases and lactose intolerance, the diagnosis is irritable bowel syndrome.

Symptoms include cramping abdominal pains with relief of the pain after a bowel movement or loose, frequent stools alternating with constipation. It is very common and affects about twice as many women as men.

Some conditions associated with it include maldigestion, malabsorption, increased intestinal permeability, food allergies and sensitivities, overgrowth of candida in the small intestines, bacterial overgrowth in the small intestines, and parasitic infections.

Increased intestinal permeability occurs when the lining of the intestines is damaged. A damaged small intestine allows incompletely digested proteins, fats and starches or candida and bacteria into the blood stream. The body may see these as foreign and form antibodies against them.

This is important because approximately 60 percent of the immune system is in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, and much of these food antibody reactions occur along the lining of the GI tract, further worsening intestinal permeability, bloating, gas, diarrhea, nausea and abdominal distension.

The best treatments for irritable bowel syndrome include first repairing the GI tract with L-glutamine, 500 mg (milligrams) 30 minutes before each meal. Small- and large-bowel ecology should be corrected by removing excessive candida, harmful bacteria and parasites.

Next, add good bacteria such as lactobacillus acidophilus and bifidus. To aid digestion, take a digestive enzyme and possibly hydrochloric acid. For more information, see my Bible Cure for Candida and Yeast Infections (Charisma House).

You also should identify and correct food allergies or sensitivities. The most common include dairy products, eggs and all wheat products. Any sugar—including fructose, sucrose, corn syrup or honey—can increase diarrhea if you have food sensitivities. For more information, see my Bible Cure for Allergies (Charisma House).

I recommend that you drink at least two quarts of filtered water a day. Also you should add a fiber supplement to your diet such as ground flaxseeds, rice bran, methylcellulose or Ultrafiber from Metagenics.

Q. I suffer from frequent bouts of constipation. Which fiber supplement do you recommend?

—F.N., Greensboro, N.C.

A. The most common cause of constipation is a low-fiber diet combined with inadequate water intake and not enough exercise. The American diet is very low in fiber and contains way too many processed foods, sugars and fats.

We should consume at least 30-35 grams of fiber a day. Many people incorrectly think a salad, a bowl of cereal and some bread will give them most of their daily fiber. But one cup of lettuce has only 0.9 grams of fiber, one slice of white bread only 0.4 grams, one slice of whole-wheat bread only 1.4 grams, and most cereals are fairly low in fiber.

There are two main forms of fiber: water soluble, found in ground flaxseeds, oats, oat bran, apples, carrots, beans, citrus fruits and barley; and insoluble, found primarily in wheat bran, root vegetables, skins of fruits, and celery.

The best fiber for you is what you can consume daily without bloating, gas or any uncomfortable symptoms. An excellent fiber most people tolerate is ground flaxseeds—1 to 2 Tbsp (tablespoons) a day. These can be ground in a coffee grinder and then added to a smoothie, cereal or a salad.

The most common fiber supplement in America is psyllium, found in products such as Metamucil. But many of these supplements add sugar or Nutrasweet.

To overcome constipation, get off the standard American diet and eat fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, peas, and drink water.

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