

LIVING WITH IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)

This pamphlet has been produced by Clyst Vale Community College Counselling Service. This is not intended to be a definitive guide, but does hope to provide information about Irritable Bowel Syndrome to families or a young person.

What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome?

IBS is a gut disorder and often is experienced as problems pooing, either diarrhoea, constipation or both. Often the patient's pooing pattern changes. Someone with IBS may feel the need to poo many times a day and may have little warning when they need to go. When a sufferer does poo they may experience a sensation of incomplete bowel evacuation (they still feel the need to 'go'). There is often discomfort and bloatedness in the abdomen; sometimes a feeling of hardness may also be present. IBS can be a brief or a life long condition, suffered by 10 – 20 % of the population.

Managing your IBS

Here are a few things you can do to help yourself:

- Increase your soluble fibre intake – eat more oats. It really will help.
- Try to exercise more. The body's digestive system improves with exercise. Try jogging, sit-ups, or even better – do both!
- Learn to relax (see our guide to relaxation, come and see the counsellors to help you perfect the technique). Stress is known to worsen IBS.

Reduce your stress

Try to identify what causes you stress and learn to avoid those situations or reduce your reaction to them. The counsellors can help with this as well.

See a doctor

You need to be diagnosed by a doctor. There are several other ailments it could be. Seeing a doctor will help you to identify the problem so you can target the condition more successfully. The symptoms of IBS can be caused by other serious conditions.

Learn not to strain...

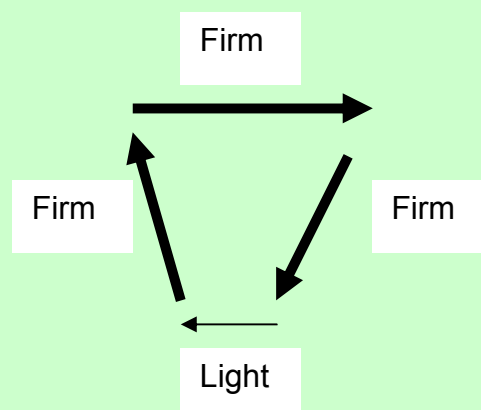
In an effort to clear your bowels when you poo you might strain to 'get a result'! This is not good for your body and can lead to damage. So, avoid straining when you're on the toilet seat. One method you might use instead is controlled, steady slow breathing – from the bottom of your lungs. Fill your 'boots' with air before you fill your upper chest. A minute or two of this technique usually produces results without any danger of straining yourself.

Abdominal pain

Often IBS can cause gut pain. Try lying down on your side, curl up and press a pillow or cushion gently against your stomach.

Massage

You may find a gentle stomach massage can help relieve gut pain and move things along. Lie down and get someone to put a bit of baby oil on your stomach, then using the palm of a hand pressing gently, work the area between your rib cage and groin with a slow circular action. They **must** work the massage in the correct direction – clockwise. This will follow the natural route of the gut and work with it, rather than against. Place greater pressure on the stomach area of both sides and top, but only very lightly across the lower belly.



Embarrassment

Unfortunately, having a problem with your gut and needing to dash to the loo can cause great embarrassment. The school will understand your situation if you explain you have IBS. You may be given an exit card to make leaving the classroom easier.

Self esteem

Because IBS often causes embarrassment, and a sufferer may feel they have little control, this can lead to a drop in self esteem. Reassure the sufferer, normalise the condition, try to avoid fussing and let them know its OK to take longer in the loo. Avoid toilet humour...

Diet

It is recommended that an IBS sufferer eat more fibre in their diet. There are two types of fibre – soluble and insoluble. Insoluble fibre, such as bran, is to be avoided.

Soluble fibre includes:

- legumes (peas, soybeans, and other beans)
- oats, rye, chia (seeds from a mint-like plant), and barley
- some fruits and fruit juices (including prune juice, plums, berries, bananas, and the insides of apples and pears)
- certain vegetables such as broccoli, carrots and Jerusalem artichokes
- root vegetables such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, and onions (skins of these vegetables are sources of insoluble fibre)
- psyllium seed husk (a mucilage soluble fibre).

Don't rush your meals; try adopting a regular eating pattern.

People with diarrhoea should avoid sorbitol, an artificial sweetener found in sugar-free sweets (including chewing gum) and drinks, and in some diabetic and slimming products.

Drinking

Try to avoid fizzy drinks, or caffeinated ones (like tea / coffee / sports drinks) and avoid alcohol. Drink around 8 cups of water a day.

Your doctor or a pharmacist may also be able to recommend soluble fibre supplements.

For more information come and see the school nurse.

Useful website:

<http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/CG061NICEGuideline.pdf>

The above document contains more detailed information regarding symptoms, other possible diagnoses, diet and medical interventions