

## Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

# Low fibre diet for irritable bowel syndrome

Fibre is that part of plant foods that our digestive system is unable to break down. It is found in cereals, fruits and vegetables and any foods containing them.

Some people find that too much fibre in their diet can aggravate symptoms of diarrhoea, constipation, bloating, flatulence and abdominal pain. Following a low fibre diet may help to decrease these symptoms.

The following list of foods will help you to make low fibre choices in your diet. You will likely only need to follow a low fibre diet for a temporary period. Try following a low fibre diet for an initial period of four weeks.

You may then find that you can gradually reintroduce some of the higher fibre foods back into your diet to a level that you can tolerate. Guidance on how to reintroduce fibre is given at the end of this diet sheet.

If you experience constipation while following a low fibre diet, you may need to take a non fermentable fibre supplement. Suitable types are normacol, celevac and linseeds. These should be taken with plenty of fluid. Your doctor or a dietitian can advise you about these.

It is important that you have an adequate fluid intake while following a low fibre diet. You should aim to have at least 8 to 10 cups of fluid daily.

**Low fibre (suitable)****High fibre (unsuitable)****Meat and Fish**

All types

Meat or fish made with with wholemeal pastry or breadcrumbs

**Dairy Products**

Milk - all types

Cheese - all types without pieces of fruit or nuts

Cheese with large pieces of fruit or nuts

Yoghurts - natural or fruit flavoured

Yoghurts with added fibre

Cream

Yoghurts with large pieces of fruit, cereal or nuts

Eggs

Fromage frais

**Fats and Oils**

All types

**Cereals and Baked Products**

White flour and baked products made with white flour such as white bread and toast, crumpets, pastry, chappati, poppadums,

Wholemeal, brown, granary, bran and soya flours and breads

Foods made with these flours.

High fibre white breads

White pasta\*, spaghetti\*, macaroni\*, noodles\*

Wholemeal pasta

Cold pasta

White rice\*, Couscous, tapioca, sago, cornflour

Brown rice

Cold rice

Rice crispies, Corn flakes, Special K, Sugar Puffs, chocolate/sugar coated cereals

Wholegrain breakfast cereals e.g. Weetabix, All-Bran, porridge, muesli and any cereal with added nuts or fruit

Plain biscuits, e.g. Rich Tea, Morning Coffee, Marie, chocolate chip, chocolate, custard creams, malted milk

Wholemeal biscuits e.g. Digestives, flapjacks, hob nobs

Biscuits containing nuts or dried fruit, e.g. Fig rolls, Garibaldi,

Plain cake e.g. Victoria sponge, Madeira

Cakes with added fruits or nuts

Plain crispbreads and crackers

Rye and whole grain crispbreads or crackers  
Oatcakes

**\*Rice, pasta and potato should be eaten whilst still hot. When cooled, these foods become more resistant to digestion, effectively increasing their fibre content.**

## Fruit

Where possible, avoid skins and seeds. Keep to a maximum of two portions a day. Try to spread fruit throughout the day.

### Low fibre (suitable)

Apples  
 Apricot  
 Cherries  
 Fruit Cocktail  
 Grapefruit  
 Grapes  
 Kiwi  
 Lychees  
 Mango  
 Melon  
 Nectarine  
 Oranges  
 Peaches  
 Pears  
 Pineapple  
 Plums  
 Rhubarb  
 Satsumas  
 Strawberries  
 Tangerines

### High fibre (unsuitable)

Dried fruit  
 Bananas  
 Banana chips  
 Blackberries  
 Cranberries  
 Currants  
 Dates  
 Figs  
 Gooseberries  
 Loganberries  
 Prunes  
 Raisins  
 Raspberries  
 Redcurrants  
 Sultanas  
 Coconut

## Vegetables and Potatoes

Where possible, avoid skins, seeds and stalks. Keep to a maximum of 2 portions a day, in addition to potato. Try to spread your vegetables throughout the day.

### Low fibre (suitable)

Asparagus  
 Aubergine  
 Beetroot  
 Carrot  
 Celery  
 Courgette  
 Cucumber  
 Leeks  
 Lettuce

Marrow  
 Mushroom  
 Onion  
 Pepper  
 Potato\*  
 Radish  
 Swede  
 Tomato

### Medium fibre (have small portions occasionally)

Avocado  
 Beansprouts  
 Green/French/Runner beans  
 Broccoli florets  
 Cabbage  
 Cauliflower florets  
 Mange-tout  
 Parsnips  
 Spinach  
 Spring greens  
 Sweet potato\*

### High fibre (unsuitable)

Pulse-type beans, such as baked, broad, butter, kidney  
 Brussels sprouts  
 Chick peas  
 Lentils  
 Peas  
 Sweetcorn

Please note that you can choose to eat more fruits than vegetables or vice versa, providing that your total intake does not exceed four portions.

**Miscellaneous****Low fibre (suitable)****Puddings**

Ice cream, lollies, sorbets, jelly, milk puddings, rice pudding, custard, blancmange

**Drinks**

Water, Squashes, Fruit juices

Tea, Coffee

Cocoa, Ovaltine

Fizzy drinks (please note these are low in fibre but they may increase wind and bloating)

Fruit and vegetable smoothies made with fruits and vegetables from the low fibre list and within the daily allowance.

**Miscellaneous**

Honey, syrup, lemon curd  
Smooth jam, marmalade without pips/seeds

Marmite, Bovril

Corn, maize and rice based snacks e.g. prawn crackers, rice cakes, cheese puffs, rice crispie cakes, cornflake cakes  
Pretzels

Boiled sweets, chocolate, toffee

Seasoning, spices

Soups, stock cubes

**High fibre (unsuitable)**

Any puddings containing fruits or nuts  
Crumbles and other puddings made with high fibre biscuits or flours

Fruit juice with bits

Fruit and vegetable smoothies or milk made with fruits and vegetables from the high fibre list

Marmalade or jam with bits/ peel  
Peanut butter

Nuts, seeds

Tropical and Bombay mix

Potato crisps\*

Wholemeal/ wholegrain savoury snacks  
Cereal bars made with oats, dried fruit or nuts

Confectionery containing fruit and nuts

Pickles and chutneys

Lentil, pea and bean soups

**\*Rice, pasta and potato should be eaten whilst still hot. When cooled, these foods become more resistant to digestion, effectively increasing their fibre content.**

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**Example meal plan on a low fibre diet**

<b>Breakfast</b>	Fruit juice (without bits) Cornflakes or Rice Crispies with milk White bread with margarine or butter Shredless marmalade or jam
<b>Mid-morning</b>	Tea, coffee or squash Plain biscuit
<b>Lunch</b>	Sandwiches made with white bread or crackers or plain crispbread Yoghurt One portion of fruit (from low fibre list)
<b>Mid-afternoon</b>	Plain scone or plain biscuit Tea, coffee or squash
<b>Evening Meal</b>	Meat or fish or chicken or eggs One – two portions of low fibre vegetables Potatoes or pasta or white rice  Milk pudding, jelly or cheese and biscuits One portion of fruit (from low fibre list) Squash
<b>Supper</b>	Milky drink Plain biscuit

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## Reintroduction of higher fibre foods

If, after a four week trial of the low fibre diet your symptoms are improved, try introducing higher fibre foods gradually back in to your diet. Introduce only one type of fibre each week using the list below as a guide. This will enable you to determine the types and amounts of fibre that you can tolerate before provoking symptoms again.

### Week 1

Try eating oats such as porridge, flapjacks

### Week 2

Try eating the skins on potatoes and on the low fibre types of fruit and vegetables, for example, apples, pears.

### Week 3

Try having an extra piece of fruit or an extra portion of vegetables from the low or medium fibre list.

Five portions per day of fruits and vegetables (not including potatoes) are recommended for a healthy diet. (NB: One glass of fruit juice counts as one portion of fruit).

### Week 4

Try replacing white bread with wholemeal or granary bread.

### Week 5

Try a higher fibre breakfast cereal, for example, Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, Bran Flakes.

### Week 6

Try reintroducing fruits and vegetables from the high fibre lists such as bananas, dried fruit, peas, sweetcorn

**Please remember that these reintroductions give a gradual build-up of fibre in your diet. The aim is to identify a level of fibre that you can take comfortably.**

For example, you may find that you can eat high fibre vegetables on days when you do not have wholemeal bread and high fibre breakfast cereals or vice versa.

If this is the case, try varying the sources of your fibre intake on a daily basis to achieve a varied diet.

## Vitamin and mineral supplements

If you are unable to reintroduce any of the high fibre foods back in to your diet, you may need to take a multi-vitamin supplement to ensure you meet your requirements. Please discuss this with your doctor or ask for a referral to a local dietitian who can assess the nutritional adequacy of your diet.



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### Document history

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