

Whole Wheat and Irritable Bowel Syndrome

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Whole Wheat and Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Overview

Irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, has no known cause, and discovering why certain foods trigger your symptoms can pose a challenge. Whole wheat may provoke abdominal pain, gas or diarrhea in some people with IBS, but eliminating whole wheat or other healthy foods from your [diet](#) may lead to nutritional deficits, according to AboutIBS.org. Before you decide to exclude whole wheat from your diet, consult your [health](#) care provider about finding nutritious replacements for whole-wheat foods.

Food Reactions

IBS can make your digestive tract highly sensitive to whole wheat, dairy products, high-fiber vegetables or other foods. For people who have this functional bowel disorder, eating certain foods may trigger abnormal muscle contractions in the colon, the lower segment of the intestinal tract. These muscle spasms can cause abdominal pain, gas, bloating and either diarrhea or constipation, according to the National Digestive Diseases

Information Clearinghouse, or NDDIC.

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Roughage

If you are sensitive to a variety of whole grains or vegetables, such as brown rice, broccoli or cauliflower, the insoluble [fiber](#) in whole wheat may be triggering your symptoms. Insoluble fiber, also known as roughage or bulk, can cause gas, bloating and altered bowel patterns in people with IBS, according to AboutIBS.org. If you can't tolerate whole-wheat breads or cereals, you may find that white bread, white rice or potatoes are more digestible, Dr. Richard P. MacDermott notes in an article published in the December 19, 2006 issue of "Inflammatory Bowel Diseases."

Fructan Intolerance

If you have gas, bloating and diarrhea after eating whole-wheat bread or cereal, you may be reacting to the fructans in these foods. Fructans are a group of poorly digested, fermentable carbohydrates that can increase diarrhea by drawing excess water into stools during digestion, Kate Scarlata, R.D., L.N. notes in her 2010 book "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Eating Well with IBS." Eating small portions of whole-wheat foods or replacing them with foods made from rice, quinoa, oats or millet may reduce diarrhea, Scarlata suggests.

Identification

Identifying dietary triggers may require excluding certain foods from your diet to determine which foods you can't tolerate, the NDDIC states. Some people who appear to have IBS symptoms after eating wheat may actually have a mild form of celiac disease, according to the NDDIC. Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder that prompts serious allergic reactions to gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye and barley. If you have diarrhea, nausea or vomiting after eating wheat, your health care provider may order blood tests to rule out celiac disease.

Prevention

Eating nutritious foods that are high in soluble fiber may improve your IBS symptoms. The soluble fiber in oats, pasta, citrus fruits and bananas dissolves into a gel during digestion and may help solidify loose stools, the IBS Treatment Center states. Finding healthy replacements for foods you can't tolerate is more effective in the long run than managing IBS with medication, Dr. MacDermott proposes. According to Dr. MacDermott, treating IBS symptoms with medication only allows the foods you can't tolerate to remain in your digestive tract longer, where they may continue to cause symptoms.

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[IBS Treatment Center: The Causes of IBS -- Fiber](#)

["The Complete Idiot's Guide to Eating Well with IBS"; Chapter 2; Kate Scarlata, R.D.,L.N.; July 6, 2010](#)

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