

Patient information factsheet

Gentle low FODMAP diet

We have given you this factsheet because your dietitian feels your symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) may be helped by trying a gentle low FODMAP diet. This factsheet explains what FODMAPs are and what a gentle low FODMAP diet involves. We hope it helps to answer some of your questions. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What are FODMAPs?

FODMAPs are a group of carbohydrates (sugars) found in certain foods that aren't absorbed properly by the small intestine. Instead, the sugars pass through the small intestine to the large intestine, where they are fermented by gut bacteria. This fermentation produces gas and fluid which can, in some people, cause symptoms such as bloating, wind, pain, constipation and diarrhoea.

FODMAP stands for:

- **Fermentable** – Foods that can't be fully digested so are fermented by bacteria in the large intestine.
- **Oligosaccharides** – Fructans and galacto-oligosaccharides are the two main groups and are found in garlic, onion, legumes and wheat.
- **Disaccharides** – Includes sucrose, lactose in dairy foods and maltose in grains.
- **Monosaccharides** – Includes fructose found in fruit, honey and sugar drinks.
- **And**
- **Polyols** – Sugars found in stone fruit, sugar-free sweeteners like xylitol and sorbitol, as well as some vegetables including mushrooms.

What is a low FODMAP diet?

A low FODMAP diet is a diet used to find out if food intolerances are causing your IBS symptoms. It involves avoiding or limiting foods that are high in FODMAPs from your diet for a short period of time.

What is a gentle low FODMAP diet?

A low FODMAP diet can be very restrictive and is not suitable for everyone. A gentle low FODMAP diet is a more relaxed version of the low FODMAP diet and focuses only on removing a number of very high FODMAP foods.

Please note that both the low FODMAP and gentle low FODMAP diet should only be carried out under the supervision of a dietitian or a trained healthcare professional.

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What does a gentle low FODMAP diet involve?

A gentle low FODMAP diet has three key steps:

- Step one: Restriction
- Step two: Reintroduction
- Step three: Personalisation

Step one: Restriction

This step involves cutting out certain high FODMAP foods from your diet.

You will need to avoid eating these high FODMAP foods for four to six weeks. Replace any high FODMAP foods you would usually eat with the low FODMAP alternatives listed. See the table below for more information about which foods you can and cannot have. Please note that the list of alternative low FODMAP foods is not an exhaustive list. You can eat anything except the high FODMAP foods included in the table below.

	High FODMAP foods to avoid	Low FODMAP foods to have
Starchy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wheat and rye-based foods (such as bread, pasta, cous cous, crackers, breakfast cereals, pastry, biscuits and cake)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rice and rice products (such as Rice Krispies and rice cakes)• Corn and corn products (such as corn flakes and corn cakes)• Oats and oat products (such as porridge, oat bran, oat crackers and oat biscuits)• 100% spelt sourdough bread• White potatoes• Buckwheat• Millet• Polenta• Quinoa• Wheat and gluten-free breads and pasta
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apples• Pears• Watermelon• Dried fruits• Stone fruits (such as nectarines, plums, peaches and cherries) <p>Watch out for these fruits used as ingredients and flavourings in squash, yoghurts and smoothies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All other fruits (such as oranges, mandarins, grapes, kiwis, cantaloupe melon, strawberries, raspberries and bananas) <p>Do not have more than three portions of fruit per day and spread fruit out during the day.</p> <p>One portion of fruit is 80g or one handful.</p> <p>If you are having fruit juice, make sure it is not a fruit from the high FODMAP foods to avoid list and keep your portion size to 150ml per day.</p>

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	High FODMAP foods to avoid	Low FODMAP foods to have
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onions Garlic Leeks Cauliflowers Mushrooms <p>Watch out for onion and garlic in processed and ready-made foods (such as gravy browning, gravy granules, stock cubes, soups, pesto and ready meals).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All other vegetables <p>If you wish to add flavour to your meals while avoiding onion and garlic, you can use the green end of spring onions, chives and garlic infused oil.</p>
Dairy or dairy alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milk Yoghurts Processed cheese and reduced-fat cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lactose-free milk Nut milks (such as almond, hazelnut or macadamia) Lactose-free yoghurts Soya and coconut yoghurts Hard or full-fat cheeses
Meat or meat alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legumes (such as beans, pulses, chickpeas and lentils) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meat and poultry (such as chicken) Fish Eggs Tofu Tempeh Quorn

If you **do not** feel any improvement in your IBS symptoms after four to six weeks, you should stop all dietary restrictions and return to your usual or preferred dietary choices.

If you **do** feel an improvement in your IBS symptoms after four to six weeks, you can assume one or more of these foods has been the cause of your symptoms. You can then move on to the next step and begin the process of slowly reintroducing the high FODMAP foods one by one to see what your main triggers are and your level of tolerance.

Step two: Reintroduction

This step involves reintroducing the high FODMAP foods back into your diet to identify which ones cause you to experience IBS symptoms.

You should slowly reintroduce the high FODMAP foods back into your diet one at a time, over a three-day period.

Day one	Start with a small amount of the food (for example, a third of your usual portion of the food).
Day two	If you don't experience any symptoms, increase to a slightly larger portion size of the food (for example, two thirds).
Day three	If you don't experience any symptoms, increase to a full portion size of the food.

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It is important that you keep the rest of your diet free from any other high FODMAP foods while you reintroduce each food. This means even if you find you can tolerate a high FODMAP food, you should still remove it from your diet before reintroducing another new high FODMAP food.

If you think a food may cause you to experience IBS symptoms, start with a very small portion. This may mean it takes you a few more days to complete the reintroduction process for that food (for example, five or six days rather than three).

If a food causes you to have any IBS symptoms:

1. Stop eating the food.
2. Make a note of the quantity you had. This is your personal limit for this food.
3. Wait for your symptoms to settle and then try another high FODMAP food.
4. Consider retrying any high FODMAP foods that cause symptoms in 6 months' time to see if your tolerance has improved.

You can use the tables below to record your symptoms. Please note that the quantities listed in the tables are only suggestions and you can adapt these to suit you.

Starchy foods		
Bread (white or wholemeal)		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	One slice	
Two	Two slices	
Three	Three slices	
Pasta (cooked)		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	Five tablespoons	
Two	10 tablespoons	
Three	15 tablespoons	
Breakfast cereal (for example, bran flakes, Weetabix or your usual wheat-based cereal)		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	One tablespoon or one biscuit	
Two	Two tablespoons or two biscuits	
Three	Three tablespoons or three biscuits	

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Fruit		
Apple		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	40g	
Two	80g	
Three	120g	
Pear		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	40g	
Two	80g	
Three	120g	
Watermelon		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	40g	
Two	80g	
Three	120g	
Stone fruit (for example, a fresh apricot (small) or a nectarine or peach (medium))		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	Half a small or quarter of a medium	
Two	One small or half a medium	
Three	Two small or one medium	
Dried fruit		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	A third of a heaped tablespoon	
Two	Two thirds of a heaped tablespoon	
Three	One heaped tablespoon	

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Vegetables		
Onion (raw or cooked)		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	One tablespoon	
Two	Two tablespoons	
Three	Three tablespoons	
Garlic (raw or cooked)		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	Quarter of a clove	
Two	Half a clove	
Three	Three quarters of a clove	
Leek		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	Half a leek	
Two	One leek	
Three	One and a half leeks	
Cauliflower		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	Two tablespoons	
Two	Four tablespoons	
Three	Six tablespoons	
Mushrooms		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	Two tablespoons	
Two	Four tablespoons	
Three	Six tablespoons	
Dairy (for example, milk or natural yoghurt)		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	125ml	
Two	250ml	
Three	375ml	
Legumes or beans		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One	Two tablespoons	
Two	Four tablespoons	
Three	Six tablespoons	

Additional food challenges		
Food: _____		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One		
Two		
Three		

Food: _____		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One		
Two		
Three		

Food: _____		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One		
Two		
Three		

Food: _____		
Day	Quantity	Symptoms
One		
Two		
Three		

Step three: Personalisation

This step involves using the information you have gathered from steps one and two to personalise your diet to help manage your IBS symptoms long term.

Once you have completed steps one and two, you will hopefully have a better idea which foods:

- cause you to have IBS symptoms
- you can tolerate in specific portions
- you can eat freely

To help you maintain a balanced diet, it is important that you include in your diet all the high FODMAP foods you have found you can tolerate. This will also help with the long-term health of your gut.

Tips for long-term self-management

- Everyone has their own tolerance threshold for total FODMAP load. This means if you have too many high FODMAP foods too often, despite tolerating them individually, you might still experience IBS symptoms.
- Remember, if you experience IBS symptoms from eating a high FODMAP food or foods, this will not cause any damage to your gut.
- If eating a certain food every day causes you to experience IBS symptoms, but you still want to include it in your diet, try eating it less often (for example, every three days or once a week).
- It is important that you attend your review appointment with your dietitian to ensure you are following a balanced diet. Your dietitian will also be able to support you in creating a personal long-term diet plan.

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Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Department of dietetics/speech and language therapy

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Email: dietetics@uhs.nhs.uk

Email: communitydietitians@uhs.nhs.uk

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/further-help-and-support

www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home

www.theibsnetwork.org

www.gutscharity.org.uk

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