6 Natural Remedies for IBS That Are Worth Trying

by LANA BARHUM

Natural Remedies for IBS

Treating irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can be tough because its symptoms vary from person to person. Moreover, while there are medications to help ease your symptoms, you may get similar relief from natural options. So, let's explore natural remedies for IBS.

Why You Should Try Natural Remedies

There isn’t enough evidence confirming that conventional drugs are helpful in treating IBS. Most of the studies out there are not definitive because they are done over short periods. Furthermore, these studies do not go into the severity of symptoms or what treatments are more effective for treating one symptom versus another.

IBS research has been better at establishing evidence on natural therapies. Many of these are better-tolerated, safer and more effective than conventional medicines.

Natural Options for IBS

Here are six natural treatment options for IBS which are worth trying.

1. Probiotics

Probiotics are naturally-occurring good bacteria that live in the gut. Some researchers believe stomach disorders occur because there are not enough good bacteria in the gut.

One 2014 review, reported in the World Journal of Gastroenterology, they looked at 43 random control trials and concluded that probiotics had beneficial effects on the most common IBS symptoms — abdominal pain, gas and bloating.

Probiotics are naturally-occurring in some foods, including yogurt, kefir, cottage cheese, dark chocolate and sauerkraut, but the easiest way to get probiotics in your diet is a supplement.

If you take a probiotic supplement, pay attention to your symptoms after a course of a few weeks. If you notice improved symptoms, then taking a probiotic supplement is a good option for management of your IBS symptoms.

2. Fiber

Fiber may help with constipation, but it can also make bloating and gas worse. The best way to add fiber to your diet is by doing it slowly over a period of a few weeks.

Foods that are loaded with fiber are whole grains, fruits, vegetables and beans. However, if your symptoms worsen when consuming these foods, you should talk to your doctor. It is possible you may need to limit fibers from food sources and instead take a fiber supplement that causes you less bloating and gas. If you decide on an over-the-counter fiber supplement, add it to your diet slowly and drink plenty of water to reduce constipation. If you find that a fiber supplement reduces your symptoms, you should use it daily for the best results.

3. Peppermint Oil

Peppermint is a natural antispasmodic that can help calm the muscles of the intestines.

A 2014 review reported in the Journal of Clinical Gastroenterology that consisted of nine studies found peppermint oil to be effective in improving overall symptoms, including abdominal pain and IBS flare-ups. The researchers further conducted it to be safe and effective for long-term treatment of IBS.

Peppermint oil comes in pill form, but peppermint tea is also available. Make sure you pick a supplement that is enteric-coated to avoid heartburn.

4. Hypnotherapy

Research shows that hypnotherapy can improve the emotional and physical symptoms of IBS.

A study found that people with gastrointestinal pain who were treated with hypnotherapy received significant symptom relief.

A random control trial of 90 adults with IBS who underwent 10 hypnotherapy sessions over a 12-week period showed significantly improved symptoms and overall improved life quality compared to those using standard medicinal treatments. The effect lasted up to 15 months.

Hypnotherapy involves progressive relaxation and suggestions of healing with imagery and feelings based on your symptoms.

5. Acupuncture

Research has shown that acupuncture may help improve IBS symptoms for some people.

A 2014 review reported in the World Journal of Gastroenterology, they looked at six randomized placebo control trials. The researchers found some benefit in the use of acupuncture for managing IBS but felt there was not enough evidence to recommend acupuncture as a long-term treatment or even a primary treatment.

Researchers are not entirely sure how acupuncture helps people with IBS, but some believe the needles stimulate electromagnetic signals in the body. These signals may promote pain-killing chemicals and push the body to heal itself naturally.

If you are thinking of trying acupuncture for the management of IBS symptoms, talk to your doctor about whether this is a good option for you.

6. Watch Your Diet

If certain foods cause abdominal, gas, bloating, diarrhea and constipation, don’t eat them. Caffeinated beverages , alcohol, chocolate, artificial sweeteners and dairy are the typical drinks and foods that exacerbate symptoms for many people.

Gassy foods can also cause problems. Avoid beans, cabbage, broccoli and other gas-producing foods if these are a trigger for you.

If fatty and greasy foods affect you, you should avoid these as well. If you are lactose-intolerant, try substituting dairy products for ones that are lactose-free or alternatives, such as soy.

Try to drink plenty of fluids daily with water being at least 80% of your liquid consumption, and find foods that are IBS-friendly.

In Conclusion

You have many options for treating IBS, but sometimes the easiest options may not be the best for your body.

Research has proven that natural therapies for treating IBS symptoms pose little or no side effects, are effective for managing symptoms and flare-ups and may improve your overall health and well-being for the long run.

However, it is still is a good idea to check in with your doctor before considering any of these natural treatments as they may interfere with medications you are already taking or other health conditions.