Six Tips for Managing IBS in the Workplace

by EMMI SCOTT

A Guide to Working With IBS

Managing irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) while working can be challenging. Sitting through meetings, interacting with colleagues, and meeting deadlines is tricky when you're uncomfortable or even in pain.

Fortunately, with planning and preparation, it's possible to manage IBS while on the job and make your workday much more comfortable.

Six Working With IBS Coping Techniques

Frequent trips to the bathroom with IBS can be overwhelming, but there are plenty of working with IBS coping techniques and strategies you can implement into your working life today.

Develop a Daily Schedule

Getting into a routine of eating, hydration, and visiting the bathroom can help your body process food more effectively.

Consider developing a togetherness system where you calendar out your tasks and meetings. Having a visual schedule, whether digital or on paper, will help you see where you regularly have time for meals and bathroom breaks.

Making a schedule for yourself can also help reduce stress, which tends to aggravate IBS symptoms. Knowing what's on your plate, as well as when you can accomplish it, will help you feel empowered to complete your tasks with reduced stress.

Plan Meals and Snacks for Work

Many people with IBS have food intolerances that worsen their symptoms. To make sure that you don't end up eating something out of the vending machines, try meal prep.

Meal prep involves preparing all of your lunches and snacks before the work week begins. This way, if your week gets busy, you wake up late or something unexpected comes up one evening, you can rest easy knowing that your lunch is ready for the next day.

Take a Lunch Break

Many people choose to take a "working lunch" and eat while checking items off their to-do list. However, it's easy to eat too quickly if you're multitasking during a meal. Eating too fast can lead to gulping down air and not chewing food thoroughly enough. Both of these lead to bloating and will increase your discomfort during the

afternoon at lunch.

Make sure to set aside an appropriate amount of time for lunch. Commit to eating mindfully, whether you lunch alone or with friends. Pay attention to each bite, enjoy the taste and texture of your food, and chew every mouthful completely.

Make an IBS Relief Kit

One way to give yourself peace of mind about working with IBS is to keep an IBS relief kit in your desk or work bag.

An IBS relief kit contains small amounts of the tools that you use to manage your symptoms. This makes them available to you if you have an unexpected flare-up of your symptoms at work.

Some items you might want to keep in your IBS relief kit are:

- Peppermint or ginger tea bags to settle your stomach
- Ginger chews for nausea
- Digestive bitters for gas, bloating, and heartburn
- Digestive enzymes to prepare your digestive system for a meal
- Fiber powder for constipation
- Mints for nausea or for a breath freshener in case you throw up

Choose the items that you think will be helpful in a pinch. Keep them in a small zippered bag in a place that is easily accessible so you can grab them when you need them.

Stay Hydrated

It’s easy to forget to drink water when you’re busy at work. But staying hydrated has a multitude of benefits, including allowing you to pass bowel movements smoothly. Keep a cup or bottle just for water at your desk and make it a habit to finish it and fill it back up every few hours.

Many workplaces provide an endless supply of coffee. This may be great for waking you up in the morning, but if you drink too much, the caffeine will dehydrate you and even cause diarrhea.

If you drink coffee at work, limit yourself to a few cups. For every cup of coffee you drink, match it with a cup of water. If you still want a flavored drink after you hit your coffee limit, try switching to un-caffeinated tea for the rest of the day.

Confide in a Friend at Work

Having a buddy tends to make challenging issues a bit easier. Try confiding in a friend at work about your IBS. Having someone to look out for you on the days you’re not feeling well might be the thing that makes your day bearable.

Overview

While dealing with IBS at work can be tough, there is so much you can do to make it better. Incorporate a few of these strategies into your next work week, and hopefully, you will see an improvement!