

Soluble Fiber ~ The Irritable Bowel Syndrome Good Guy

Hmmm....You've heard of fiber, you're pretty sure you know what it is, and you've probably had it recommended to you as beneficial for Irritable Bowel Syndrome. But **soluble** fiber? Is this something special? Yes, it is.

Soluble fiber is the single greatest dietary aid for preventing Irritable Bowel Syndrome symptoms in the first place, as well as relieving them once they occur. Here's the kicker. Soluble fiber is NOT typically found in foods most people think of as "fiber," such as bran or raw leafy green vegetables. Soluble fiber is actually found in foods commonly thought of as "starches", though soluble fiber itself differs from starch as the chemical bonds that join its individual sugar units cannot be digested by enzymes in the human GI tract. In other words, soluble fiber has no calories because it passes through the body intact.

Soluble Fiber Foods ~ the Basis of the IBS Diet



As a general rule, the grain and cereal foods at the top of this list make the safest, easiest, and most versatile soluble fiber foundations for your meals and snacks.[1]

Rice

Pasta and noodles

Oatmeal

Barley

Fresh white breads such as French or sourdough (NOT whole wheat or whole grain) *

Rice cereals

Flour tortillas

Soy

Quinoa

Corn meal

Potatoes

Carrots

Yams

Sweet potatoes

Turnips

Rutabagas

Parsnips
Beets
Squash and pumpkins
Mushrooms
Chestnuts
Avocados (though they do have some fat)
Bananas
Applesauce
Mangoes
Papayas (also digestive aids that relieve gas and indigestion)

*Please choose a baked-daily, high quality, preservative-free brand. White bread does not mean Wonder.

Why is soluble fiber so special? Because unlike any other food category, it soothes and regulates the digestive tract, stabilizes the intestinal contractions resulting from the gastrocolic reflex, and normalizes bowel function from *either* extreme. That's right – soluble fiber prevents and relieves ***BOTH* diarrhea and constipation**. Nothing else in the world will do this for you.

How is this possible? The "soluble" in soluble fiber means that it dissolves in water (though it is not digested). This allows it to absorb excess liquid in the colon, preventing diarrhea by forming a thick gel and adding a great deal of bulk as it passes intact through the gut. This gel (as opposed to a watery liquid) also keeps the GI muscles stretched gently around a full colon, giving those muscles something to easily "grip" during peristaltic contractions, thus preventing the rapid transit time and explosive bowel movements of diarrhea as well.

By the same token, the full gel-filled colon (as opposed to a colon tightly clenched around dry, hard, impacted stools) provides the same "grip" during the muscle waves of constipation sufferers, allowing for an easier and faster transit time, and the passage of the thick wet gel also effectively relieves constipation by softening and pushing through impacted fecal matter. If you can mentally picture your colon as a tube that is squeezing through matter via regular waves of contractions, it's easy to see how a colon filled with soluble fiber gel is beneficial for both sides of the IBS coin.

As a glorious bonus here, normalizing the contractions of the colon (from too fast or too slow speeds) prevents the violent and irregular spasms that result in the lower abdominal cramping pain that cripples so many IBS patients. This single action alone is the reason I don't eat

anything on an empty stomach but soluble fiber. Ever. The only foods I want to trigger my gastrocolic reflex are soluble fiber, as that's the only way I can keep those contractions (and thus my life) normal. I routinely snack on small quantities of soluble fiber foods all day long, every single day. If I don't have a chance to eat or I'm not that hungry, I'll take a [soluble fiber supplement](#).

Wait a minute, aren't all these soluble fiber foods high carb? Won't they make me fat? Click here to [learn why the answer is NO - they won't](#).

My goal is continual stability, and a steady ingestion of soluble fiber insures this. In the short run this strategy allows me to prevent problems from snack to snack and meal to meal, but in the end it adds up to long-term stability from day to day, week to week, and even month to month. I've never found a better method for completely preventing my IBS symptoms than basing my diet on soluble fiber foods.

You can keep your colon stabilized each and every day by basing all meals and snacks on soluble fiber foods.

Now, wasn't there something mentioned earlier about *two kinds* of fiber? Wasn't there a fiber that can *hurt*, not help, IBS symptoms? [Learn all about insoluble fiber](#), and how it can actually make your IBS much worse.

[1] Unfortunately, starchy foods are the enemies in the current high protein/low carbohydrate fad diets. Please realize that an overwhelming number of research studies on the subject consistently show that the healthiest diets in the world, across all countries and cultures, are those high in complex carbohydrates and low in fat and protein (particularly from animal products). For numerous resources and references in this area, please consult the Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine. Founded in 1985, the PCRM is a non-profit organization supported by over 5,000 physicians nationwide, dedicated to promoting preventive medicine. PCRM - 5100 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20016. Phone: 202-686-2210. www.pcrm.org.