



Patient Information - Irritable Bowel Syndrome and Food Sensitivity

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a very common problem which affects 10-15% of the population. The symptoms can feel like an inevitable part of the person's life with erratic bowel motions, bloating, tummy pain and tiredness. It is often worse after eating, sometimes triggered by specific foods and people frequently report their IBS started or became worse after periods of stress, gastrointestinal infections or medication such as antibiotics. Symptoms such as blood in bowel motion, weight loss or onset later in life need further investigation and are not typical of IBS.

As the bowel looks normal on a camera test (colonoscopy) or under a microscope (biopsy) in IBS, it is called a "functional" problem, and GP's prescribe fibre supplements, anti-spasm medication and sometimes anti-depressants. Unfortunately the symptoms often persist despite medication and can cause frustrating limits to social life and work.

The Dove Clinic Approach

We recognise the importance of bowel health as a foundation for our general wellbeing. After providing treatment to improve digestive health our patients often report not only improvement or resolution in "IBS symptoms" but also general improvement in energy levels and issues such as skin problems, sinusitis and chronic pain.

Fermentation and Gut Organisms - People with IBS often recognise a pattern of bloating, wind and altered bowel motion after certain foods such as sugars, wheat or other carbohydrates and yeast containing foods. From our perspective, this occurs due to a pattern of "fermentation" within the bowel when the carbohydrate meets populations of bacteria and other fermenting organisms that are out of balance or growing in the wrong place. Step one of improving these symptoms often involves working together to look at diet and supplementation to rebalance the gut and reduce the volume of fermentable foods.

Other digestive organs - As well as the small and large intestine, it is important to remember the role of stomach acid, the liver, gallbladder and the pancreas in producing effective, symptom-free digestion. The pancreas in particular is famous for its role in blood sugar control producing insulin and glucagon. However it also has a vital role in the production of enzymes to help our gut break down and absorb the protein, fat and carbohydrate from our diet. We provide a range of nutritional supports depending on the needs of the individual.

Food sensitivity - Like asthma and eczema which involve an imbalance in immune response, the number of reports of food allergy and sensitivity are increasing rapidly. It is important to recognise that 70% of our immune system lives within our gastrointestinal tract, with the dendritic cells of our immune system constantly surveying the foods and organisms that move through our bowel providing feedback to the rest of our immune system to respond with tolerance or hostility. Classical food allergy involves a rapid immune response with symptoms such as rash, lip and tongue swelling. Food sensitivity is not triggered by the same “IgE-mediated” immune pathway, but people often notice repeated symptoms with certain foods. These reactions can cause a wide variety of immediate or delayed symptoms which can make it difficult to diagnose. If food sensitivities are a feature, we can perform Low Dose Immunotherapy (Neutralisation) testing and treatment. This uses solutions of various foods for skin testing. Increasingly dilute solutions of various foods are tested on the skin until there is no longer any sign of redness or immune response. This dilution can then be used as a treatment dose to help tolerate exposure in the diet. This is a safe approach which is supported by many previous clinical studies.

Stress and emotional wellbeing

It has long been recognised that our emotions affect stomach acid and gut function. We will all be familiar with the effects of nerves or life pressure on our digestive system! This can be particularly marked in IBS. We provide a range of natural approaches and Mindfulness courses to reduce stress and enhance emotional wellbeing.

To book a consultation, or for more information please call 01962 718000.