

IBS management through diet

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A long-term study has shown that those who suffer irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can effectively manage the condition by avoiding certain types of foods that trigger their symptoms.

Monash researchers have provided evidence from a long-term study that a diet low in foods belonging to a family of carbohydrates, FODMAPs (fermentable, oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols) effectively reduces symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). FODMAPs are poorly absorbed by the digestive tract.

IBS affects one in seven adults and is the most common condition presenting to gastroenterologists. The research team at Monash University has shown in earlier short-term studies that a diet low in FODMAPs may be used to control [gastrointestinal symptoms](#) associated with this condition. However a well-controlled longer-term study was required.

Published in the leading and most influential journal in the field *Gastroenterology*, Professor Peter Gibson's and Dr Jane Muir's research supports the low FODMAP diet as first-line therapy for IBS sufferers. Indeed, FODMAP-containing foods were featured on the cover of this prestigious journal.

"Our study investigated the effects of a diet low in FODMAPs compared with a typical western diet, in a randomised, controlled trial of patients with IBS," Dr Muir said.

"People with IBS following the low FODMAP diet experienced significantly fewer gastrointestinal symptoms such as bloating, discomfort and pain."

FODMAPs are poorly absorbed short-chain carbohydrates fermented by gut bacteria that produce gas and IBS [symptoms](#). Confusingly, FODMAPs are found in a wide range of foods including onion, garlic, wheat, rye and fruit including apples and pears.

"Although we have shown in earlier short-term studies that the diet is effective, a long-term study was required," Professor Gibson said.

"The strengths of our research include the comparison of the degree of symptom benefit of the low FODMAP diet compared with a typical Australian diet.

"The high level of evidence produced by this study is very important and should lead to changes in practices and treatment paradigms."

Beyond filling the critical gap in evidence, this latest Monash study confirms the need for ongoing quality research around this topic.

"Much of the information available to the general public and clinicians about managing IBS is not evidence-based and therefore unreliable. For example, the value of hydrogen breath tests is now questionable and many online and hardcopy publications provide inaccurate FODMAP food content," Professor Gibson said.

"The recently developed Monash University Low FODMAP diet app not only provides accurate information about foods that trigger IBS reactions but also provides regularly updated and accurate information on this evolving story."

Provided by Monash University

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