

FIBER SUPPLEMENTS



Fiber in IBS can be a little confusing. Not only is the amount important - either too much as too little in your diet can trigger symptoms - but the type of fiber also matters.

Psyllium (Ispaghula)

This unique fiber has dual functionality, thickening up loose poops but at the same time softening hard poops. Therefore, it's thought to benefit all types of IBS by normalizing poop output. It may also improve other symptoms, such as bloating and incomplete evacuation. On its own, however, psyllium is unlikely to resolve all your IBS symptoms, so if you are interested in supplements, I recommend you use it in combination with other strategies.

Psyllium Prescription

Start with 1 and 1/2 teaspoons per day and see how things go. You may like to increase it to 1 tablespoon per day in the second week if needed, gradually increasing up to 3 tablespoons per day if useful and tolerated. If there's not improvement after one month, stop. If your gut is extra-sensitive, you may like to start with 1 teaspoon per day. The practical tips:

- It's available from most health food stores.
- It forms a thick gel when mixed with cold water (similar to what happens in your gut), so it's best combined with oatmeal or warm soup. Try adding it to your own homemade granola, too (see recipe). Use 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons (150 mL) of fluid per tablespoon.
- Check in with your doctor if you need to continue taking it over six months.
- Like many fibers, psyllium can decrease your appetite. If you are underweight, it may be best to stick to the half dose and continue to monitor your weight. If your weight decreases, stop and discuss with your dietitian.

Flaxseed

In terms of food sources, there's some evidence for flaxseed in constipation - predominant IBS (IBS - C). If you want to give it a go, the recommendation is to start with 1 and 1/2 teaspoons per day and gradually increase up to 2 tablespoons per day over four week, as needed and tolerated. Sprinkle some on your breakfast, yogurt, salads, or soups. Be sure to include an extra 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons (150 mL) fluid per tablespoon of flaxseeds.

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