

Dear Maria

I suffer from IBS – I've tried everything prescribed to me, from medicine to a high fibre diet and nothing helps. I still have lots of pain and discomfort and always have to know where the lavatory is wherever I go. I'm desperate – can you help? SB

Dear SB

IBS, a collection of symptoms known as Irritable Bowel Syndrome is not the life sentence it is proclaimed to be and can be reversed within a few months on an eating plan which I can tailor to your specific needs. Your symptoms can both be addressed with a customised eating plan.

High fibre, so often prescribed for IBS may not be the answer. The *type* of fibre is extremely important, as well as foods that need to be avoided and foods that need to be included in your diet. Spontaneous evacuation leads to a depletion of nutrients which is unhealthy and can lead to malnutrition and dehydration if not corrected.

Many patients have found that by choosing to adopt their eating plan long term, other health issues resolve themselves.

How long is long term? This depends on the severity of the IBS and patient compliance. People tend to put up with symptoms for years after being told that they have to live with the condition. Picky eaters wouldn't change their eating habits, which could have caused the IBS in the first place. If both compliance and mild symptoms are present, long term could be in terms of months.

Once symptoms have gone, foods are reintroduced back into the diet. This makes it easier to identify foods that could cause a recurrence of symptoms, which need to be avoided for good. How your body responds to these foods depends on certain enzyme functions and your immune response.

Don't despair – there are surprisingly simple dietary measures that can help and make a huge difference to you.

Maria Griffiths is a Nutritional Therapist with 20 years' experience and is registered with the Complementary & Natural Healthcare Council, which meets national standards. She is a Senior Associate Member of The Royal Society of Medicine.