



5 top tips for relief from digestive distress

When you suffer from digestive distress, whether it is gas, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, or reflux, life can be just miserable! I can help you get to the root of your digestive troubles so that you can get relief from your discomfort and feel better again. But in the meantime, here are some things you can do to lessen your suffering now.

Diet: It makes sense that your diet plays a big part of what happens in your digestive tract!

- Do you feel like everything you eat affects you negatively? People who suffer with Irritable Bowel Syndrome often experience significant relief from the **FODMAP** diet. This diet eliminates the foods that feed bacteria in your small and large intestine, which can create gas and bloating as well as diarrhea and constipation. Check out [Monash University's app](#). I urge you to try this diet out for several days. If dysbiosis (an imbalance of good/bad bacteria and/or yeast) is a cause of your discomfort, then this diet will give you significant relief! **Note that the FODMAP diet is not a forever diet – it is just to get you relief when we are trying to address the root cause of your symptoms.**
- Perhaps you have acid reflux that is making you miserable. Certain foods are known to trigger acid reflux: Citrus, tomato, spicy foods, chocolate, coffee, peppermint, garlic, onions, and carbonated drinks. Try eliminating these foods from your diet to give yourself some relief while we work on the root causes of your acid reflux.
- Another cause of digestive distress in regards to diet is food allergies. You can have a delayed [food sensitivity test](#) (tests for IgG antibodies) done or try an elimination diet to determine if you have food allergies. Eliminating the most common allergens (gluten, dairy, soy, eggs, corn, peanuts) for 3-4 weeks and then re-introducing them one at a time can be a helpful way to determine your food allergies. **And yes, you need to eliminate all of them at once in order to effectively determine what is aggravating your system. You can do it!**

Carminative and other herbal teas: Certain herbal teas can help relieve your troubled digestion.

- Carminative teas help to relieve gas and promote proper peristalsis (movement in the gut). Chamomile, fennel, mint, anise, and clove are all carminative herbs with mint often being the most helpful. In addition, some of these herbs have antimicrobial properties, which will help you if you have dysbiosis (an imbalance of good and bad bacteria and/or yeast) in your digestive tract. Try drinking a cup of tea after each meal or when you have significant digestive distress. Use 1 tablespoon of dried herbs to 8 oz. of boiling water, steep covered for 15 minutes. **Note: If you have reflux, do not use mint tea as this can exacerbate your reflux.**
- If you have reflux, demulcent teas will be helpful in soothing the tissues of the esophagus. Try licorice or marshmallow root tea between meals, using 1 tablespoon of dried herb per 8 oz. of boiling water. **Note: If you have hypertension, do not drink licorice tea as it can elevate your blood pressure.**

Stress-relieving activities: A significant contributor to Irritable Bowel Syndrome and other digestive disorders is stress. I know you are probably tired of people telling you to reduce your stress. While stress may not be at the heart of your digestive symptoms, it is likely that it plays a part in them. So, working on this aspect can only help!

When we are stressed, our nervous system is in what we call in a “sympathetic” state. This is the state of running from the tiger to save our life. Short-term periods of stress are okay, but when we are chronically stressed, we remain in the sympathetic state for too long. In order for proper digestion to take place, our nervous system must be in a “parasympathetic” state. This is also called the “rest and digest” state. Not being in a parasympathetic state during and after eating can have a significant negative effect on our digestion. Having a relaxation practice is essential to put us into a parasympathetic state, especially before and after meals. It could be deep breathing, meditation, yoga, music, laughing, or anything that helps you relax.

Castor oil packs: Castor oil is anti-inflammatory, immune stimulating, and detoxifying. The oil is applied topically over the abdomen and then a flannel cloth or old T-shirt is placed over the abdomen, followed by a hot water bottle. The hot water bottle helps to relax cramping muscles of the abdomen. Keep this in place for 30-40 minutes, resting as you do so. This can be a time to slow down and put your body into a parasympathetic state. Castor oil packs are especially helpful for the cramping associated with Irritable Bowel Syndrome as well as constipation. You can also sip your carminative tea while you do your castor oil pack!

Probiotics: Probiotics are the good bacteria that inhabit our digestive tract. Having the right bugs in our digestive tract not only helps our digestive function, but also has a huge impact on other areas of our body – our immune system, detoxification, inflammation, and neurotransmitter and vitamin production. Too many antibiotics, stress, alcohol, and a sugary diet can all cause a decrease in the good bacteria in our gut. If you've never taken probiotics, start with a low dose of around 8-10 billion and increase slowly up to 25-50 billion per day. **One warning: If you have IBS, be wary of probiotics that contain prebiotics such as FOS, arabinogalactan, or inulin.** Many people with IBS often have SIBO (Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth) and prebiotics can cause an exacerbation of symptoms. Choose a probiotic without a prebiotic. If you think you might have SIBO, contact me so that we can assess that and help you get relief!

Note: These treatment instructions do not constitute medical advice, except if given by Dr. Morse to a patient actively under her care