

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)

Common IBS triggers include:

- Stress. Keep in mind that stress includes emotional stress as well as physical stressors such as insufficient sleep, overwork, an imbalanced diet or irregular eating habits and the use of alcohol and drugs.
- High fat foods (fatty meat/poultry/fish, whole milk, egg yolks, nuts, fried foods, coconut milk, oils, butter, etc.)
- Artificial sweeteners (sorbitol, xylitol)
- Carbonated beverages
- Coffee (both regular and decaf)
- Foods high in insoluble fiber

Sometimes other issues are the real cause of IBS-like symptoms, such as:

- Food allergies – soy, wheat, gluten, eggs, fructose and lactose intolerances are all possibilities
- Bacterial imbalance to the intestinal tract as a result of antibiotic use (may be improved by use of digestive enzymes; see Digestive Disorder handout)
- Intestinal candida (yeast)
- Laxative abuse
- Irregular eating habits, bingeing, purging, restricting and eating disordered behaviors
- Colitis, Crohn's disease, GERD, small bowel obstructions, etc. (see doctor to rule these out)

If IBS-like symptoms persist for some time, it is advisable to see a physician about it in order to determine the exact nature of the illness. If you are diagnosed with IBS, the good news is that there isn't any true functional problem in the digestive tract. While the issue is typically chronic and there is no Western medical treatment for it, Chinese medicine truly shines at treating IBS and other digestive disorders. IBS symptoms (gas, bloating, constipation and/or diarrhea, cramping, etc.) occur as a result as one of the most commonly seen disharmonies in Chinese medical theory and are generally easy to correct. Depending on your actual symptoms and the severity, it may be recommended that you take Chinese herbal medicine along with acupuncture or that you use acupuncture alone.

You may also consider seeing a registered dietitian who can help you determine if you have food allergies. You can do this concurrently with your acupuncture treatments. An elimination diet may be suggested for you. It is a fairly restrictive food plan that is used over the course of a couple of months in order to determine what foods specifically may be contributing to your IBS-like problems. If you find that you do, in fact, have a food allergy, then the good news is that by eliminating the food(s) from your diet completely, your IBS-like symptoms will be resolved.

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