

## *Module 4, Lesson 7 Handout:*

### **IBS Food Triggers**

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) can drastically reduce your clients' quality of life and is often confusing and frustrating to figure out. You can help alleviate stress in your clients' lives, which may also be causing some elevated symptoms, by understanding how to identify their trigger foods and recommend changes in their diet.

Food journals are a great place to start to identify trigger foods. Recommend that your client keep track of the time they eat, what food they're eating and the symptoms, including onset, severity and location of discomfort. This may sound tedious, but it can help you better understand specific ingredients or elements of foods that are causing your clients discomfort and how that food or foods are affecting them. Common symptoms to look out for are bloating, cramping, diarrhea, excess gas and constipation.

Below is a list of common food triggers to help you sort through your clients' observations and food journals, and understand what may be causing their symptoms.

#### **Caffeine**

Advise your clients with IBS to limit drinks and foods that contain caffeine, such as **tea, chocolate, coffee and soda**. Research has shown that coffee in particular increases gastric acid secretion and induces a laxative effect in healthy people, and exacerbates the symptoms of IBS. Research is still being conducted in the IBS population with regards to coffee intake, but the general recommendation is to limit caffeine from all sources to 400mg per day, and may even be less for those with IBS depending on their individual symptoms.

#### **Alcohol**

Alcohol intake has been associated with greater exacerbation of IBS symptoms in females than males when compared with healthy subjects without IBS. One study of 1,242 people who suffered from IBS found that 27% of those people avoided alcohol intake in order to reduce symptoms. The most common symptoms associated with alcohol intake and IBS were diarrhea, stomach pain and indigestion. Chronic alcohol consumption alters absorption of macronutrients (carbohydrates, protein and fat), decreases gut motility and injures the mucosa (intestinal lining) of the gut.

## **Fried Foods**

Foods that are fried in fatty oils can cause abdominal cramping and discomfort. Encourage your clients to eat foods like grilled chicken or fish (rather than fried), and limit consumption of fast food which is often fried in greasy oil (which they should be doing anyway). This may be a great opportunity for your client to get creative and experiment in the kitchen with baking, roasting and grilling or using spices and herbs to season their food.

## **Gluten**

Research is still being conducted but suggests that the FODMAP (short-chain carbohydrates) content in wheat rather than the gluten content (protein), is what causes heightened GI symptoms in IBS patients. These FODMAPs are discussed further in The Low FODMAP Diet handout in this lesson. One study did find that a reduction in gluten consumption for 4 to 8 weeks improved GI symptoms in those with IBS, while reducing daily bowel movements and intestinal permeability. Refer to your Foods That Contain Gluten handout from Level 1, Lesson 4. It's important to note that a gluten free diet, unless warranted by celiac disease or a wheat allergy as discussed in Level 1, may cause nutritional deficiencies and may not be suitable for all of your clients who have IBS.

The foods listed above can all exacerbate gastrointestinal symptoms for your clients who suffer from IBS. Working with them to identify which foods are causing these symptoms is the best way to get to the bottom of it and go from there to see where you can make modifications. It's your role to help your clients Eat Empowered to alleviate symptoms, so they can focus on all of the pillars of a Nutritious Life that complete their health and wellness.