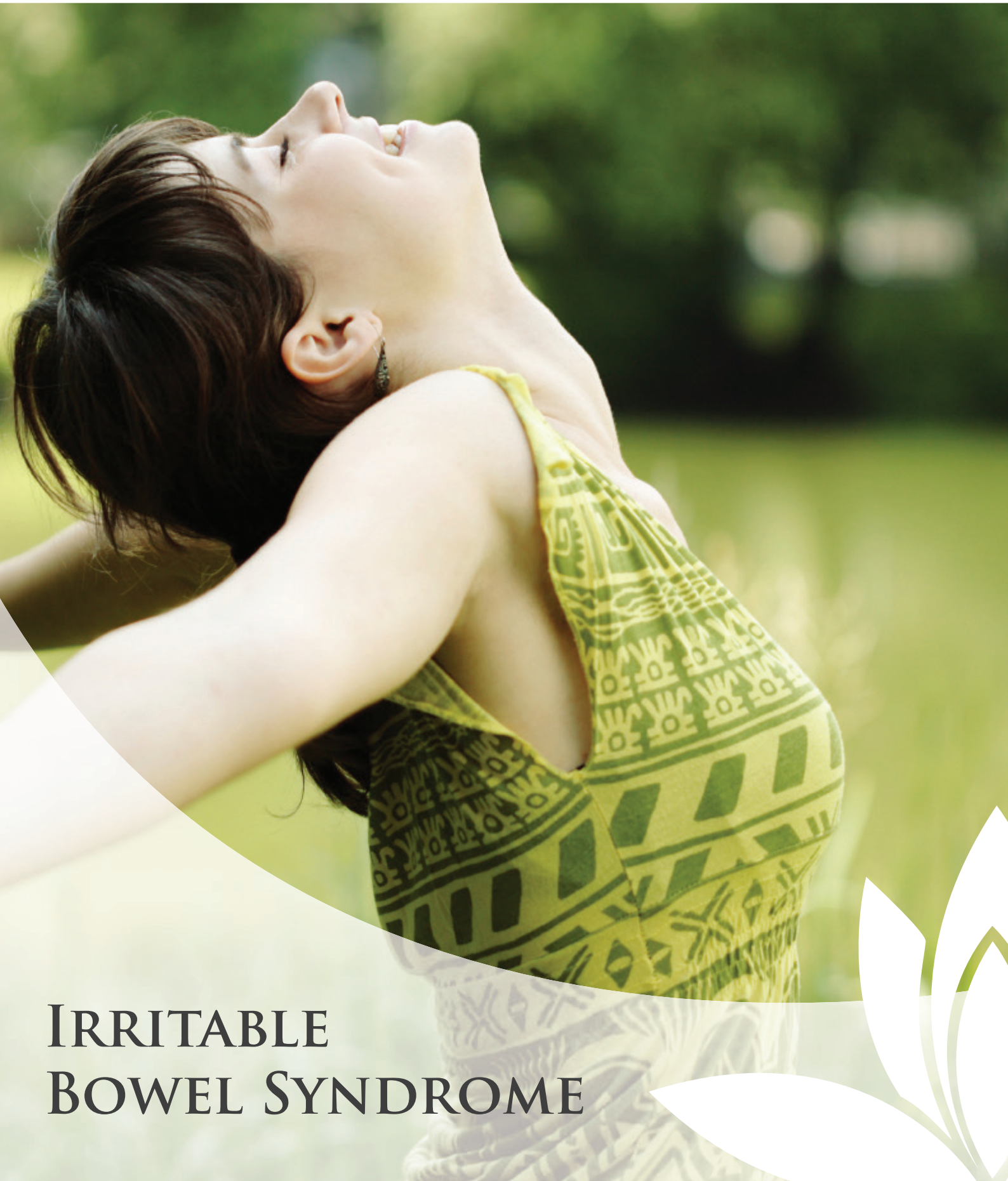




MULLEN NATURAL HEALTH CENTRE



# IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME



## IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)

### WHAT IS IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a functional bowel disorder that causes abdominal pain, bloating, gas and either or both diarrhoea and constipation. About one in seven Australians have IBS, with twice as many women affected as men. It often starts in young adulthood and is a major cause of lost work productivity and school time.

IBS generally takes three forms. Some people experience diarrhoea, others experience constipation, while the third group experience alternating bouts of each. Symptoms often appear as a result of eating certain foods, changes in diet, drugs, hormones and during stressful periods, as the gastrointestinal tract is particularly sensitive to these stimuli.

It is important to note that most people who have IBS also suffer from a lesser-known syndrome called leaky gut, which can have widespread impacts on a person's overall health.

### LEAKY GUT SYNDROME

Leaky gut syndrome occurs when the intestinal lining becomes inflamed, causing it to be permeable or 'leaky'. The inflamed lining allows unwanted substances (like tiny food particles, bacterial waste products and toxins) into the bloodstream which would normally be eliminated from the body. This puts unnecessary stress on the liver, lymphatic system and immune system, as these organs must work to clear the body of the excess toxins. It can also cause the gastrointestinal tract to inflame, resulting in some of the symptoms of IBS.

Leaky gut syndrome has far reaching effects on a person's health and can contribute to or cause other health problems such as food allergies, celiac disease, dysbiosis (flora imbalance in the gut), pancreatic insufficiency, respiratory problems like asthma, chronic joint and muscle pain, and skin rashes like eczema. It has also been linked to autism, ADD and ADHD.

Treating an underlying problem of leaky gut syndrome will help to improve IBS symptoms, as well as other health conditions you may be experiencing.

### CAUSES

Many factors are thought to cause or make someone predisposed to IBS. These include:

- Depression
- Environmental factors such as changes in routine and emotional stress
- Familial predisposition
- Certain drugs like antibiotics, antacids and painkillers
- Foods including wheat, dairy, and citrus fruits, or eating large or high-fat meals
- Drinking alcohol or caffeine (in some cases)



- Hormones – menstruation can trigger or exacerbates symptoms
- A previous infection of the gastrointestinal tract, such as a bacterial, viral or parasitic infection.
- Poor digestion, including low levels of stomach acids, digestive enzymes or bile acids. Organs involved include the stomach, pancreas and liver.
- Leaky gut syndrome

## SYMPTOMS OF IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

The signs and symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome vary from person to person, including:

- Abnormal stool frequency – greater than three bowel movements per day or less than three bowel movements per week.
- Abnormal stool consistency – lumpy and hard or loose and watery stools
- Abdominal pain and/or discomfort relieved by defecating
- Straining during a bowel movement
- Need for bowel movement immediately after waking or after eating
- Feeling of incomplete bowel movement
- Urgent rush to have a bowel movement
- Changes in bowel habits
- Diarrhoea or constipation, or both alternately
- Bloating or feeling of abdominal distension
- Flatulence
- Passing mucous from rectum
- Fatigue and difficulties concentrating
- Anxiety and depression – studies show about 60 % of IBS sufferers also have anxiety, while 20% have depression.
- Obesity – studies have found that obesity is associated with chronic gastrointestinal complaint, such as irritable bowel syndrome.

## LIFESTYLE ADVICE FOR SUFFERERS

Changes to lifestyle can help to reduce the severity of IBS symptoms. Some suggestions include:

- Keep track of your food – start a comprehensive food and symptom diary to figure out which foods are triggering IBS symptoms.
- Apply heat to relieve spasms and cramping in the abdomen – try hot water bottles or long hot baths.
- Reduce stress – stress can exacerbate symptoms and even cause a relapse of IBS. Reduce stress using meditation, yoga, aromatherapy, abdominal breathing, hypnotherapy or psychological counseling.
- Exercise regularly – exercising helps to reduce stress levels, increases circulation, improves digestion and helps with wind pain and constipation.
- Quit smoking – it may exacerbate symptoms of IBS, giving sufferers a good reason to quit.



## DIETARY ADVICE FOR SUFFERERS

Changing your diet is an important step in decreasing the severity of IBS symptoms. As well as drinking plenty of water and eating smaller meals, the following may assist in the management of symptoms:

- Increasing fibre intake using the right supplements may reduce abdominal pain, cramping and gas.
- Some people who suffer IBS also have a sensitivity to gluten – a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye. The results of these studies found that a much higher number of gluten-sensitive people have IBS symptoms than the population in general.

## RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTS

- Take a high-strength probiotic – there is scientific evidence these living good bacteria can help relieve some symptoms of IBS, including abdominal pain, bloating and gas.

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The good news is irritable bowel syndrome and leaky gut syndrome can both be managed by making some simple adjustments to diet and lifestyle. Treatment methods vary from person, as does the length of time taken to rebalance the digestive system. A good place to start is to remove gluten and dairy from your diet immediately. Other tips include chewing well and eating slowly to aid digestion, avoiding caffeine, alcohol and fatty meals, as well as pinpointing IBS triggers such as stress, depression or familial disposition.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT, CONTACT  
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