

The FISH Plans

A Range of Self Help Complementary Medicine
Regimes for Common Diseases and Problems

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

By

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The F.I.S.H. Plan for Irritable Bowel Syndrome

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Warning

This ebook is not intended to be a do-it-yourself diagnostic kit. All abdominal pains should be taken seriously and should be properly diagnosed by a doctor who can take an accurate history and examine you. The use of the recommendations in this book comes very firmly after the correct diagnosis of irritable bowel syndrome has been made. The contents of the book deal with the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome by complementary methods. The explanations given are intended to inform, empower and allow you to help yourself only after a proper diagnosis has been made.

Introduction

Why the FISH plan? FISH stands for Food Intolerance, Stress, and Heredity, the three main and interwoven causes of irritable bowel syndrome. All need to be addressed for true success.

During my 27 years as a general practitioner there was a group of patients who came to see me regularly, and for whom I had little to offer. These were the patients who suffered from irritable bowel syndrome. They ranged from the women who would have an exacerbation of their abdominal pains and bowel upsets in the days approaching their menstrual periods to the stressed out businessmen who would regularly have a most unpleasant kind of attack before an important meeting. The symptoms that they suffered varied from a little nausea and slight abdominal pain for a few hours to vomiting, diarrhoea or constipation with a griping abdominal pain that could last a few days

Many of them, especially those with the more mild symptoms gave up on me and simply bought over-the-counter drugs from their chemists. This means that British doctors, even those of us in general practice, do not know the full extent of the difficulties that irritable bowel syndrome causes.

The drugs that modern medicine uses will not be specifically mentioned in this book except as warnings when their use might be dangerous. That is because this book is designed for self help. It is based on the explanations and discussions with irritable bowel syndrome sufferers that took place during the consultations and the study days of those many years in general practice. It will outline the three main causes of irritable bowel syndrome in nonmedical language and show ways to overcome these, reinforcing that advice with lifestyle recommendations that are well recognised to be helpful.

Most importantly, it is designed to give you the tools to help yourself. In that way it will enable you and encourage you that you can do something about your irritable bowel syndrome yourself, to show you that you don't need

the doctor to interfere with your body with his pills, and to put you back firmly in control of yourself.

You have nothing to lose but your irritable bowel syndrome!

Section 1

What is Irritable bowel syndrome?

Classical irritable bowel syndrome is a distressing problem that is characterised by abdominal bloating, alternating diarrhoea and constipation and colicky abdominal pain. It tends to come in attacks that can be linked with foodstuffs and stress. It can also run in families. At its worst it may be associated with bleeding from the bowel. This pattern of symptoms may also signal a bowel cancer and it is imperative that this problem is excluded before you take up any advice that you might find in this little book.

Indicators in favour of the problem being Irritable bowel syndrome would be a long history of the problem with clear worsening at times of stress or a relationship to certain foods. These would have to be separated by times of normal bowel activity and with no real change in weight nor bleeding from the bowel

Indicators in favour of a cancer would be a short history of the problem, with a relentless presence of the symptoms, bleeding from the bowel and weight loss.

The intestine or bowel is a long open tube extending from mouth to anus. The main problem associated with irritable bowel syndrome is the disorderly contraction of the muscles that line the wall of the small intestine. This is the first part of the bowel and is principally involved with the absorption of foodstuffs. It is lined with specialised linings that do this. From a physiological viewpoint the bowel is in contact with the open air and technically part of the “outside”. Because of this the wall of the bowel is well supplied with systems that keep dangerous substances from getting into what it regards as the inside of the body where they can cause damage. The bowel wall contains muscles that act either along the wall or around it like a ring. Later on you will see that the wall becomes leaky and allows toxins to pass through it. These

toxins affect both the specialised linings and also the intricate network of nerves that control the movements of the muscles.

The food is let out of the stomach in liquid form in individual waves caused by the muscles tightening in the stomach wall whilst the outlet of the stomach relaxes. This wave is then helped along the bowel by relaxation of the ring of muscle in front of it and the tightening of the ring of muscle behind it. This can be quite a complex business, as the bowel needs to “know” where each packet of food is at any one time.

The toxins interfere with the function of the nerves. These then are unable to send the correct messages to the muscles so that they do not contract in this orderly way. The muscles contract both in front of and during the passage of the packet of food. This can cause a slowdown or even a reversal in that movement and allow the bowel bacteria longer to digest the food package and so produce more gas than normal, hence the distressing distension that can make the abdomen very swollen. The muscles may go into spasm during this disorderly process causing colicky pains. Then it is quite possible that the muscles go into a frantic overdrive and this could result in the diarrhoea that may be such a feature of irritable bowel syndrome.

The nervous difficulty could well be problem in sensing the positions of the various food packets or in the ability to respond to that knowledge. It could, of course, be a mixture of both.

Nevertheless the principal problem lies in the way that the absorbed toxins affect the controlling nerves in the bowel wall.

Section 2

What causes irritable bowel syndrome?

Irritable bowel syndrome has three main causes. These are

- An inherited, genetic factor.
- “Leaky Gut Syndrome” that is shown by intolerance to certain foods (this is the root cause of food intolerance which is also known as food sensitivity),
- Stress

These factors are presented in the time sequence that they occur to make the explanation of how they work together more coherent. They are probably of equal importance overall. Bearing that in mind the important thing is that these three things are present in different proportions in each person, so someone may have a genetic tendency to food intolerance and stop having irritable bowel syndrome if they stop drinking milk, whilst others can drink as much milk and eat as much yoghurt and cheese as they please without any problems. However, perhaps they will then have severe attacks of irritable bowel syndrome when things go wrong at work.

It is very difficult to know the exact proportions of each of these three factors that contribute to irritable bowel syndrome in any specific person and so the sensible approach is to deal with all the possible factors that you can. Clearly it is not possible to change your inherited tendency to irritable bowel syndrome but you can change your lifestyle, take an herbal remedy (as long as it has been properly tested), and address stress and food intolerances.

Heredity

Irritable bowel syndrome can certainly run in families. There really is little that can be done about heredity. It's most important lesson for the sufferer is the knowledge that irritable bowel syndrome can be inherited.

If you have irritable bowel syndrome you should be aware that you could well have passed that tendency to your children. That means that your child's recurrent "Bilious Attack" could be irritable bowel syndrome and not a "grumbling appendix".

Many a normal appendix has been removed from a child with irritable bowel syndrome!

It is well recognised that women may suffer from bloating and abdominal problems probably related to irritable bowel syndrome around their menstrual period and that must fall into the category of "an inherited tendency" because a person's sex is a genetically and thus hereditarily determined aspect of our makeup

Leaky Gut Syndrome (Food Intolerance)

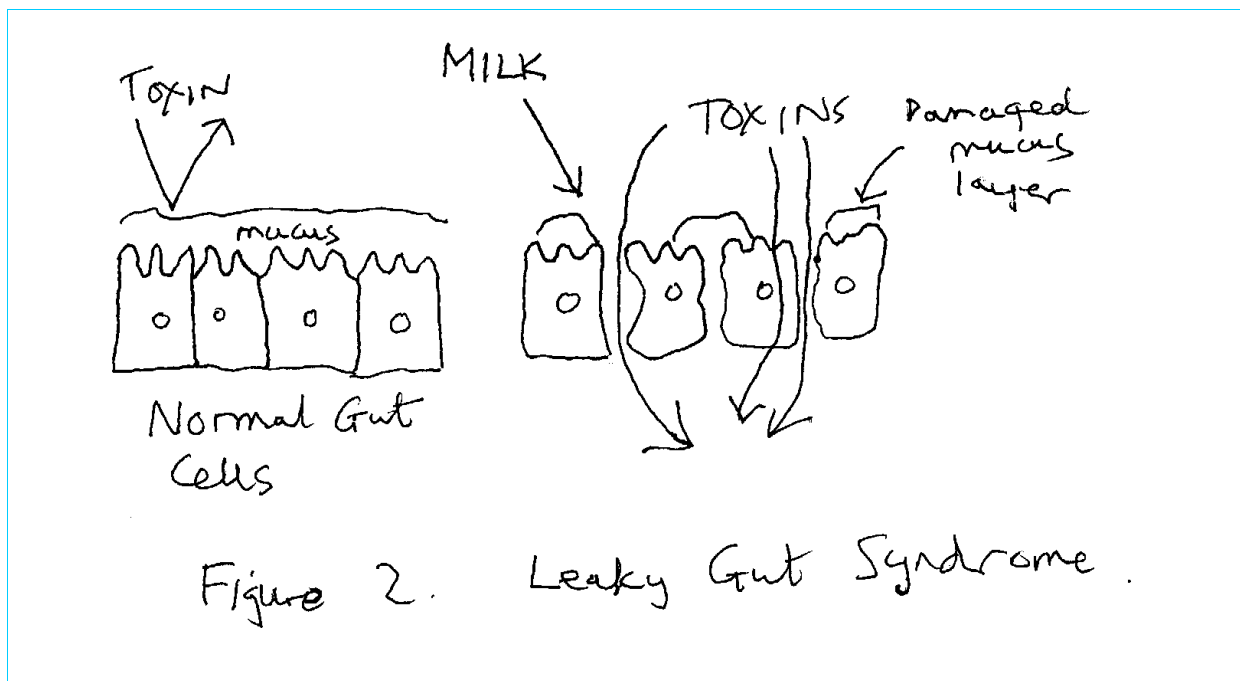
Irritable bowel syndrome is one of many conditions one of whose root causes appears to be a condition with the rather graphic name of leaky gut syndrome. We do not know the exact causes of leaky gut syndrome but it has been suggested that the use of antibiotics in early life, and alcohol and anti-inflammatory drugs in later life are potential causes. However evidence is emerging that it could be caused by baby food containing foods that their bodies were not designed to handle.

If we compare the diet of an average modern newborn baby with that of his earliest ancestor we find that the ancestor will have had breast milk for some months after birth (at least until he had enough teeth to cause difficulty with breast feeding and sufficient control over the coordination of his hands and vision to be able to pull his food apart). Thereafter his food would have been the same as the rest of his family group, so he would have eaten fruit, tubers and roots with the occasional helping of meat if the hunters had been successful.

If that is compared with the modern baby's diet, then nonhuman milk is likely to be the first deviation from the ancestral model. Modern babies are fed eggs, and yeast in the form of baby foods and vitamin supplements, very

early, well before the appearance of their teeth. Up to that point at which their intestines are not mature enough to cope with these foods. When a baby is newborn it is not fully developed and it is reasonable to assume that the immature intestine would be best fed those foods for which it is designed (breast milk and nothing else).

It is not difficult to see that the immature intestine can become damaged by the modern kind of diet that deviates so much from that basic plan and it seems that the prime mover could well be non-human milk. This is difficult to demonstrate scientifically, as this would mean taking tissue samples from the intestines of babies. That would be unethical unless doing so would directly benefit that baby.



This is an unlikely scenario but there is, however, plenty of evidence for the flipside of that coin; that breastfed babies have a lower incidence of immune problems, such as less colds and ear infections, and less difficulties with digestion. If this theory is correct then non-human milk contains something that causes some damage to the layer of mucus that protects the cells that line the intestine. Non-human milk will also clearly lack the specific

immune molecules from the baby's mother that also help to protect the intestinal lining.

This damage to the mucus layer reduces the protection that the mucus gives to the corrosive effects of the intestinal juices, whose function is to digest tough plant and animal foods. These juices would rapidly digest the intestinal wall if that wall did not have efficient protective mechanisms.

The reduced protection leads to shrinkage of the cells of the intestinal lining. This causes gaps to appear between the cells of the lining of the intestine that allow abnormally large molecules to get through the intestine's wall and into the circulation.

The results from food intolerance testing (also known as food allergy or food sensitivity) show that the top three offending foods are: - cow's milk (giving a positive test in 7 out of 10 people with food intolerances); yeast (positive in 4 out of 10 of these people); and egg white (positive in 2 out of 10). The next three are almond, cashew nuts and wheat and these top 6 items account for all those foods that affect more than 1 person in 10 who have food intolerances. Interestingly egg yolk gives a positive in only about one person in 20 and the first grain to appear is wheat in about one in ten people. It is one or more of the proteins in these foods leaking through the gut wall that indirectly causes the irritable bowel syndrome.

Although artificial baby milk may not contain any of the foods or their derivatives mentioned above more recent work suggests that a person's sensitivity to the milk of one animal is likely to apply across the board so that goat or sheep milk is as likely to be culprits as cows milk or ordinary dairy products.

There is a lot of confusion about allergies and although leaky gut syndrome is technically an allergic response, it is not as dangerous or rapid in onset as the classical allergy associated with nuts such as peanut. It is important to understand that leaky gut syndrome is a different kind of allergy.

Classical allergy uses a different pathway for its effects and these appear immediately after exposure to the offending food and cause a rapid

release of histamine and histamine like molecules. The effect of this can produce difficulty breathing, swelling of tissues and perhaps circulatory collapse and death. Classical Allergy is a medical emergency and does not cause irritable bowel syndrome. If you think that you have a classical allergy you must discuss this fully with your doctor, as the problem needs proper investigation and treatment

Cows milk and cows milk products such as casein and whey powder: yeast and egg white are common constituents of baby foods and vitamin supplements and it seems that the original damage is probably done by non-human milk causing shrinkage of the cells and the formation of abnormally large gaps between the cells. Because of this damage toxic molecules that are parts of the other foods are able to squeeze through the abnormal gaps between the cells and pass through the intestinal wall where they circulate in the blood stream until they reach their target organs.

Unlike the other main offenders in the triad of FISH related diseases (Migraine and Eczema) the symptoms in irritable bowel syndrome relate both to the circulating toxins and to the portal of entry, the gut. As time goes by the baby's diet widens but the so-called staples of non-human milk, eggs and yeast are fairly certain to play a major and permanent part in the baby's diet. Whenever these offending substances are eaten they will attack the leaky intestine and if they are eaten every day, which is most likely, its lining will never have time to recover.

Later on in the baby's development more unusual foods will be eaten and some of these will maintain the leakiness of the intestine, so by the time the baby is an adult there will be an average of five food intolerances which, by and large, will include at least one and usually one or two of the troublesome three.

The leakiness of the intestine is sustained by the daily consumption of these foods but also by the inappropriate use of antibiotics. In the past doctors were guilty of using antibiotics in an uncontrolled way to treat

infections, usually caused by viruses that would get better on their own accord, without medical interference. Ear infections are a case in point.

There are many helpful bacteria in the intestine that help the absorption of vitamins and play an important role in controlling the numbers of harmful bacteria that also live in the intestine. Antibiotics would kill both harmful and helpful bacteria and that would lead to imbalances in the types of those bacteria that live in the intestine. The result would be an increase in harmful bacteria and fungus such as candida because these tend to be more resistant to antibiotics than the helpful bacteria.

This would maintain the damage to the protective mucus layer and according to some experts allow the filaments of candida to keep open the gaps between the cells that line the intestine.

Alcohol affects the mucus lining of the intestine and irritates the underlying cells. It is, in excess, a potent cause of intestinal and stomach damage. Alcohol also has a damaging effect on the liver, which is an added problem because the blood from the leaky intestine, which is full of the larger toxic molecules, passes straight to the liver. In a normal liver any toxic molecules that managed to penetrate the defences would be easily mopped up and destroyed and the blood made safe before it went on its way around the rest of the body.

However if the liver is damaged due to overwork dealing with the flood of toxic molecules pouring through the leaky intestinal wall it cannot deal efficiently with all these toxic molecules and becomes overloaded. The toxic molecules then overflow the liver and pass into the rest of the body and back to the gut to cause your irritable bowel syndrome.

The other major cause of continued leaky intestine is the use of irritant drugs and it is ironic that one of the favoured modern medical treatments for pain of any sort including that due to irritable bowel syndrome is a drug called Ibuprofen. This drug is effective for the abdominal pain of irritable bowel syndrome but is a cause of irritation of the intestine as is that old favourite,

aspirin. It is a salutary thought that although these drugs may be relieving the symptoms they are making their cause worse.

There are other dietary causes that seem to be related to the direct effects of the food eaten rather than any food intolerance. These will be detailed in the help section

As a final thought on the subject of milk, our animal companions and we humans are the only species (other than cats) that consume the milk of other species and the only species that eat milk products of any sort after weaning and continue to do so lifelong. Regrettably it would appear that by doing this we might be doing ourselves and our pets harm, as even household pets can suffer from food intolerances.

As you will read later on the good news is that we may be able to abstain for some time but then go back to our favourite cheeses without problems.

Stress

The stress response is often referred to as the “fight or flight “ response and that describes it very well. It is another aspect of our ancestors’ way of life that we have less opportunity to handle correctly in our increasingly hectic and restrictive modern world. When faced with danger our ancestors would be prepared to run away or to stand and fight. Their bodies released a soup of hormones into the bloodstream to make this happen.

This hormonal soup would cause the heart to pump more rapidly so that it could push the blood round the body more efficiently to increase the supply of oxygen and energy giving sugar to the important areas for flight or a fight. At the same time the blood would be diverted to those areas where it was most needed. So it would selectively go to all the muscles but especially those of the legs and arms so that they had extra energy to fight or run.

The blood would also be diverted to the brain so that it was able to think quickly and efficiently.

These actions prepared them for the physical activity that was to follow (running or fighting) which would in turn bring down the hormonal soup to levels which would fall back to normal within just a few minutes after the necessary physical activity had taken place.

Nowadays it is usually inappropriate to run away or attack the boss no matter how satisfying that might be and the hormonal soup is only slowly removed from the blood because of this relative physical inactivity.

The intestine has one of the richest supplies of blood and this supply is shut right down during the fight and flight response in order to send the blood to the brain and those muscles where it is needed most. This is not a problem when fighting or a running away as the hormonal soup is soon used up and the situation rapidly goes back to normal with the intestine's blood supply soon being restored.

However in our modern non-fighting, non-fleeing times the restoration of the blood supply to the intestine is very much slower and the intestine is starved of blood for quite a long time. This slows up any healing that may have been going on in the damaged intestine wall and worse, actually increases the leakiness of the intestine at times of stress. Because of this increased leakiness more of the larger toxic molecules can get into the blood stream making the symptoms worse during times of stress.

Ironically these symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome seem to be dose related (the more of the offending food you eat, the worse your irritable bowel syndrome will be) and the habit of comfort eating that some people have when they are under stress may well be making those symptoms even worse. This is especially true if the comfort foods contain ingredients to which they are intolerant, such as chocolate with its milk, or excessive quantities of wine containing alcohol with its directly harmful effect on the intestine.

Some of the constituents of the hormonal soup are substances that affect the workings of the immune system and tend to dampen down the proper responses that protect you from attack by germs. The important consequence of this is that people who are chronically stressed tend to suffer

from more colds and infections than those who are not as stressed and those people who are continuously stressed may also be more liable to develop more serious diseases.

This alteration of the immune and healing response is likely to slow down any repair process in the intestine wall and lead to either a slower resolution of the leaky gut syndrome or a worsening of the irritable bowels symptoms. It seems that the intestine takes many months to heal and that each episode of stress will result in a setback for this healing process, rather like knocking the scab off a healing graze that will then require the repair process to start all over again so that a whole new scab can be formed.

Section 3

What can I do about it?

The lazy way

Changing all those things that are mentioned below would amount to a major upheaval in anyone's life and you may be happy to compromise with a reduction of your symptoms rather than attempting to eliminate them altogether.

When you have read them you may think that some of the elements of the regime are more important than others and would settle for the most important in each category. If so the skeleton regime below is for you.

The technique outlined in this book supposes that irritable bowel syndrome has the three main factors as its cause, and that one of the three will be more important than the others. If you attack one aspect diligently, wholeheartedly and single-mindedly, then you stand at the very best a one-in-three chance of getting a good improvement. That good improvement would only happen if

your irritable bowel syndrome were completely caused by one factor and the others had no influence at all, and that you had by good fortune chosen that factor to address. For instance you could rigidly exclude milk and all the other foods to which you were intolerant but if part of the problem was stress then you would not get as good a result as if you had dealt also with that stress and attended to the hereditary factors.

However if you attack all three factors in the same diligent way you are as certain as you can be that you will sort things out. The results indicate that about seven in ten people with irritable bowel syndrome will have milk intolerance; seven in ten with irritable bowel syndrome who use cd/mp3 will improve. The case for herbal medicines is less clear although there are prescribable preparations containing mint that can help. This could also be connected with the intuitive use of mints as after dinner stomach settlers.

Assuming now that the three factors appear in individuals in equal proportions this means that the very least we can expect is that about three in ten will get an improvement. So the best chance that you get attacking just one factor is roughly equal to your worst chance in attacking all three.

Life is never as simple and ordered as that and in real life each of the factors has a proportionately different influence and that makes the chances worse if you only deal with one factor. The problem is that we cannot know whether most of your problem is food intolerance, or stress, or heredity and so if you choose just one factor to address you are relying on luck to pick the right one and succeed.

Dealing with all three is far more certain to produce a satisfactory result. Furthermore attacking the most probable thing with the most effective tool on each of the three fronts gives the best lazy chance.

This is the lazy way

These are the action points

- **Eliminate milk and milk products for 18 months**
- **Listen to the cd or mp3 daily for 6 months**
- **Take enteric coated mint tablets for 6 months**

The More Complete Way

The previous sections presented the three main factors in the time order that they began their influence on your body. This section starts with the general measures that can be taken but follows up with the three factors in order of overall benefit achieved by action on them.

As a prelude there is a section on “General Measures” that should be the foundation and lifelong basis for action

The second section is “Stress” action on which certainly will produce benefits in other areas of your life and may well be the most important factor in the largest number of irritable bowel sufferers;

The third is “food intolerance” action on which may well produce benefits in other areas. Research at a testing laboratory has shown that many people suffer from more than one of the syndromes that seem associated with it. For instance people with Irritable bowel syndrome tend also to suffer from migraine or eczema

1 General Measures

Because irritable bowel syndrome is a problem that comes and goes and leaves you feeling perfectly healthy between times, it is difficult to suggest advice that will not seem overly restrictive during those days when

things are normal. It is difficult to be disciplined when you are waiting for something not to happen.

This list of factors implicated in irritable bowel syndrome is not exhaustive and the things are mentioned so as to give you a few pointers in the direction of where to look for trigger factors.

These include: - overtiredness, fever, irregular meals, rushed meals or the general disturbance caused by travelling. It is very difficult to provide anything other than an outline list, as the number of precipitating factors is as many as there are people with irritable bowel syndrome. Most sufferers will have a good idea from their experience what the likely factors are in their special case.

If you are a woman a diary will help you to see whether the irritable bowel syndrome follow the cyclical hormonal pattern but you would need to keep up the entries for a few months to be reasonably certain of this.

If you want to simplify the work of identifying the triggers you should first do your best to eliminate the factors over which you have some control. This might mean no late nights or lay ins, no smoky parties and three meals a day of even size.

Already the regime is perhaps getting irksome and one of the fundamental ideas behind this little book is a technique that addresses all the range of factors simply.

The More Complete Advice: - Stage 1: - Keep a diary covering at least four distinct irritable bowel syndrome attacks and closely look at the 48 hours before each attack to identify any common factors. Eliminate those factors, starting with the easiest first.

2 Stress

Stress reduction is big business these days and there are a great many stress counsellors and companies providing plans to help people address the stress of modern living. The basic ideas of stress reduction are simple and in the spirit of this little ebook they will be presented to you simply.

The main objective in stress reduction is to reduce the amount of the hormonal soup that circulates in the blood as a result of the long-term arousal of the fight or flight process and which in turn cause the long-term problems associated with stress. It is the prolonged high levels of this hormonal soup that are not dispersed by physical activity that contribute to the stress and thus the irritable bowel syndrome.

The ways that this can be achieved are to prevent the hormonal soup being made in the first place (Routines, identification and elimination of stressors, talking therapies) and doing something to make it go away once it is there (touching therapies, and physical exercise),

These things may not always be practical in every day life so there are various self managed therapies including brief contact therapy, electrotherapy and bio-feedback or any other reputable talking therapy on cd or mp3)

Routines

Prevention is achieved by taking control of your life in areas where you feel that it is out of control and that involves living with a routine that is comfortable for you. Some people find that they manage better with a rigidly timed routine and others like the day split into three or four compartments where the boundaries are moveable.

For instance the person who always leaves for work at 8am; arrives there at 9 am; opens the post until 10am; answers the letters until 10.30 and then has precisely 15 minutes for a coffee would find the kind of regime that I followed quite happily as a GP to be too loose. By contrast I would have found the rigidly timetabled life too restrictive. I used to arrive at the surgery

at 9am and see my morning patients until they were all seen, then have a coffee whilst dealing with the correspondence and repeat prescriptions. After that would come the house calls and if time permitted a swim at lunchtime. At 3 pm I returned to the surgery and completed any paperwork before seeing the afternoon patients.

There were few fixed timings in that routine and an important point - it also factored in some time for myself that involved exercise.

Point 1 Have a comfortable routine that works for you (preferably written down) and stick to it

Stressor resolution

There are many things that produce stress in our lives whether at home, at work or generally in the world. They will continue to cause havoc and produce and maintain the harmful hormonal soup if they are not addressed or avoided.

At the end of every day it is worthwhile spending ten minutes replaying the events of the day that has just ended and identifying one cause of stress for action. The most important part of that process is making sure that the identification is accurate enough to be able to deal with the problem sensibly.

For instance it is no good saying that the problem is "I hate my boss and everything she does" because that is not a specific enough problem to be able to be solved. It would need to be a much more specific issue such as "My boss criticised that last report that I wrote". Having identified the problem then you will need to form a plan to solve it.

A potential plan for the example given would be to see your boss and find out exactly and specifically what was wrong with that report. This would also require the goodwill of your boss and your boss's willingness to sort things out, because she will need to calmly define what she thought was wrong in order to tell you in a way that enables you to act sensibly and solve

the problem. This might turn out to be impossible for your boss who will have her own stresses.

You will always need to be prepared to mark some problems as insoluble. In that circumstance you will need to decide whether you can put up with the problem being insoluble as it is or whether you need to get out of the situation that you are in. That can be a very difficult decision but it needs to be faced.

Either way forward is an improvement on a simmering resentment.

Similar examples occur in your home life. The day needs to be examined at its end and a defined stressor identified. For example “I hate the way he moans about my cooking” is not a soluble problem, whereas “We must find out what we would both like and cook it together” turns the issue into an action that could be performed constructively. As you can see the first statement concentrates on the hate you have towards the moaning which is your response to the problem rather than the issue itself, which is the cooking.

The second alternative concentrates on finding out the detail of the problem so that it may be addressed. These are probably different approaches to those that you have tried before and the best way of breaking the vicious cycle of anger and blame is always to do something unexpected.

Whilst the example given is unlikely to be serious enough to cause a break-up of the relationship in an extreme case the problem may not be soluble at all. Then you have to focus away from it or have to accept and tolerate it or remove yourself from the situation; the last is a most difficult and serious decision.

Point 2 Sort out a stressor a day

Talking therapies

There are a great many talking therapies that are effective in dealing with stress. They come in many guises but some of the best known are: - cognitive behavioural therapy, hypnotherapy, autogenic training, relaxation and visualisation, meditation and counselling. The scientific evidence of their effectiveness is slowly being produced. Irritable bowel syndrome is one of the best-researched problems in this area and there are many published papers dating back to the 1970s. These show that bowel directed hypnotherapy is a treatment of choice for people with irritable bowel syndrome. However it would be helpful to investigate and choose a suitable one for yourself, if only to provide relaxation on a regular basis

Brief Contact Therapy

This is one technique with scientific evidence. The editor of the European Society of Hypnosis Journal (Hypnos) coined this name when that journal published one of my research papers. Hypnos is a peer-reviewed journal of high standing in the hypnosis world. This means that the research was reviewed by at least three independent experts who are not known to the researcher.

There is always suspicion that any work produced by a lone researcher is biased and almost anything he says or writes invites the response “he would say that wouldn’t he”. The use of peer reviewing ensures that the research is reputable and unbiased as the reputation of the publication rests on the rigour of its science, protected by the independent peer review.

The research in question into migraine used a relaxation visualisation technique recorded on to audiotapes and showed that three months after they started listening to the tapes 83% of the participants had an improvement in either the frequency or the severity of their migraines or indeed both. Round about 70% had a markedly noticeable improvement.

I believe that migraine, irritable bowel syndrome and eczema share a common causation and may be looked at as different facets of the same problem, and that they potentially share a common remedy. Therefore the results from the migraine research could reasonably be just as valid for irritable bowel syndrome.

There are Cd and MP3 based self hypnosis techniques. Select one that suits you.

Any further selection of treatment or therapist is beyond the scope of this little book but we would suggest that you visit www.shared-care.com which is our website on which fellow sufferers from irritable bowel syndrome have recommended both therapies and therapists that worked for them.

Point 3 See your therapist regularly or listen to cd or mp3 daily according to its instructions.

Touching Therapies

Touching and massaging therapies release “happy hormones” into the body that are different from the fight and flight complex. These produce relaxation of mind and body and cut the production of the stress inducing hormonal soup. Touching and massage can usefully be combined with the talking therapies that work on the stressful thoughts, rather than their effects. Touching and Massaging therapies include Indian Head Massage, Aromatherapy, Reflexology, Shiatsu, and Acupuncture.

There are many institutions that provide part time tuition for basic touch therapies such as head massage and aromatherapy so it may be worthwhile investigating these to practice with your partner. However we would suggest that you visit www.shared-care.com which is our website on which fellow sufferers from irritable bowel syndrome have recommended therapies and therapists and helpful organisations

Point 4 Choose a touching therapy and have it regularly

Exercise

Therapies cost money and so does the gym or swimming pool. Exercise, especially something like brisk walking for half an hour three times a week, will help to reduce the harmful hormonal soup; will release quantities of helpful “happy hormones” and is potentially free. What you are doing in effect is initiating the flight response in a controlled way.

It does not matter too much if this flight is some hours after the hormonal soup has been produced because the object is to reduce the long-term background quantities of these hormones and this is what regular exercise does.

The cheapest form of exercise is brisk walking. Jogging is probably less helpful from a general viewpoint as there is a tendency to injure leg and back joints from the constant jarring on hard surfaces. If you are at all overweight then swimming is probably the best exercise as this removes this risk of joint jarring and subsequent injury.

Point 5 Build half an hours exercise into your routine three times a week

The More Complete Advice:- Stage 2 Sort out a routine and build in exercise, sort out a stressor a day, take up a touching, or talking therapy,

3 Leaky Gut Syndrome

The evidence that is slowly emerging suggests that if people avoid the foods to which they are intolerant for three months then the symptoms will be improved in seven out of ten people. If they then reintroduce these foods the symptoms will come back if they had gone away or worsen if they are still

present. The medical allergy specialists regard this as the acid test of food intolerance.

This suggests that the leaky gut has not had enough time to recover. If however the foods are avoided for at least eighteen months there are indicators that the foods can be reintroduced without any recurrence of the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome. This would fit with the theory that daily exposure to the problem foods (principally milk, yeast and egg white) hinders healing but that given a reasonable length of time the healing is completed and these foods are now no longer a problem. In view of the part played by inherited factors there is likely to be a lifelong tendency towards difficulty with the primary culprit.

This substance is likely to be nonhuman milk and it is probably the primary cause of leaky gut syndrome. After the initial damage is caused, egg white and yeast can get through the bowel wall and after them almost any food or food constituent may follow to cause intolerance to that particular food.

The effects seem to be dose related, so that the symptoms will be worse after taking cheese, biscuits and coffee together rather than just taking a milky coffee. A rational regime would be to exclude milk and milk products rigidly for eighteen months and then reintroduce them slowly, one at a time and starting with small quantities. If irritable bowel syndrome recurs then any recently reintroduced food should be immediately stopped again for a further year. This is initially a difficult problem as milk appears in different guises, such as cheese, cream, butter, yoghurt, whey powder, casein, caseinates and so on, but you will soon get to know the common packaging and labelling and their notice of the constituents of the foods in them and so whether you need to avoid that particular product

Lactose is a sugar and is not involved in the leaky gut syndrome. It does not therefore cause irritable bowel syndrome and in that context is safe to eat. There are many substitutes for cows' milk, examples being rice milk and soya milk but these themselves may induce food intolerances in the presence of a should avoid introducing milk substitutes to overcome the problem.

The remainder of the troublesome three (yeast and egg white) probably need not to be excluded for so long. It seems that one year should be sufficient. You may well be able to be less rigid about excluding these as long as the milk exclusion is complete. It is probably a good idea to try reintroducing these slowly and keeping off them for a longer time if symptoms recur.

The troublesome three and the nuts are found in many foods and again the labelling should be consulted. Remember that it is yeast that produces the alcohol in drinks and that there are likely to be yeast residues in beer, with less in wine and spirits.

However life is to be lived and you must prioritise the foods that you exclude.

I have to say that as a successful user of my technique I drew the line at excluding wine although I did avoid real ale for the duration! I am now enjoying cheese again so there is light at the end of the tunnel for irritable bowel sufferers who adopt this technique

The commonest place to find yeast, and eggs is in the bakery, and bread and cakes of all sorts should be avoided unless you are certain that they are yeast and egg free.

Again this is getting onerous and it is worth pointing out that this should only be necessary for a short while and that these foods may well be able to be introduced later.

It is interesting to note that almond and cashew appear in the top six foods involved in food intolerance and there may be both classical allergy and food intolerance to one food at the same time in susceptible people. Because of the potential fatal dangers of classical allergy in this mix of problems cashew and almond should be excluded with the other three foods for at least 6 months.

Furthermore, if you think that you have a classical allergy to any food you must discuss this with your GP giving as good an idea as possible what the offending foods are. Classical allergy is easily proved by a simple blood

test as long as the laboratory selects the correct foods to test. It is up to you to provide that information as accurately as you can

Food intolerance blood tests, either of the IgG ELISA or leukocyte cytotoxic type have their place and indeed can pinpoint exactly what foods need to be avoided. There is no evidence that excluding all the foods that show up on these tests is more effective than excluding the troublesome three with such a plan as I have suggested above and it is probably worth saving that approach for consideration if this whole holistic regime is ineffective.

There are other tests for food intolerance that are scientifically unproven and until there is some evidence that they can truly identify food intolerances they cannot be considered as a sensible alternative to this plan.

Leaky gut is made worse by alcohol, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and these should be avoided or used in moderation. You can buy Ibuprofen (a non steroidal anti-inflammatory drug) over the counter from your chemist. Others are prescription drugs and it is important to check with your doctor or pharmacist whether anything taken regularly can cause intestine or stomach problems or will react badly with anything else that you might be taking. The occasional use of a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug in irritable bowel syndrome during an attack is not likely to hold up the leaky gut healing process too much and it can be very helpful in relieving the abdominal pain. For further advice and support see the list of helpful addresses at the end of the book

The More Complete Advice: - stage 3. Strictly exclude milk and milk products for eighteen months. Exclude egg white, yeast for 1 year, almonds and cashew nuts for six months. Avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and drink alcohol in moderation

4 Heredity

As this section involves those things that we get from our parents, gender obviously being one of these things, it includes the hormonal problems suffered by some women and their potential solutions. It also deals with herbal remedies, an important part of your plan to overcome your irritable bowel syndrome

Hormonal Factors

Irritable bowel syndrome may occur regularly in the last part of the menstrual cycle just before the menstrual period starts. It is probably due to the rapidly changing hormone levels that occur at that time. These hormonal changes may produce a large number of unwanted effects through their actions on each individual cell in the body. One of the features of hormones as a means of controlling the functions of the body is that the hormones affect every cell and cell type in the body because they are present in the blood that is circulating throughout the body, and in the fluid that bathes every cell.

Clearly, because each cell type is so different in structure and function from each other there will be a different effect on a skin cell when compared to a brain cell and it is this relatively untargeted feature of hormonal control of any sort that can lead to such bad effects. The main line of self-help for this problem involves taking back control of the problem. This may seem a rather bizarre and difficult thing to do but we all have more control over such things as our hormones than we may realise. There are a number of observations that will show this to be true.

Firstly, there is the well-documented phantom pregnancy in which the woman can produce all the physical changes of pregnancy (except the baby), including all the hormonal alterations. This happens from time to time when the woman desperately wants to be pregnant and convinces herself that she is pregnant. It is the belief that she is pregnant that is the key to the situation. The woman has overridden the normal hormonal controls and produced

hormonal changes by will in the absence of a pregnancy. These changes mimic the pregnancy hormonal changes and it is the increasing circulating hormones having their normal effects on all the cells and cell types in the body when they are present in high levels that cause the symptoms of pregnancy to appear.

These symptoms reinforce the woman's belief that she is pregnant and the body continues the normal increasing hormonal pregnancy routine reassured that there is a pregnancy there and all is well. The phantom pregnancy can continue to the point when it is obvious by the lack of baby's kicking and the negative medical tests that there is no baby and the pregnancy is a phantom.

The second common observation is that if the woman is stressed or if she is coping with a major life event the menstrual period can come at an unexpected time. Marriage, exams, moving house are examples of causes of this phenomenon.

Lastly it is well observed that women such as nuns who live in closed communities tend, after a while in that community, to synchronise their hormones and to all have their menstrual periods at the same time.

These groups of women were all able to do what is usually regarded as impossible. They were all able to change the cycle of their sex hormones. The first group, the women with phantom pregnancies, achieved this by will. They altered the inbuilt instructions on their hormone balance to the pregnancy route instead of the normal route because they desperately wanted to be on the pregnancy route. The second group suffers the hormonal upset through stress.

All the different hormones throughout the body can be reasonably considered as one integrated system where the balance of them all is dependent on the balance of each of the others. Hormonal disturbances are rather like knocking a moving pendulum. It will change its swing, not only forwards and backwards but also sideways as well. For instance when I was a GP I ran a clinic for women who needed Hormone Replacement Therapy

for the menopause. I ran a series of hormonal blood tests and found that in one in six women there was disturbance of the thyroid as well as the sex hormones.

This was unexpected.

I checked the thyroid hormone levels every three months when I saw these women and to my surprise once the women were adequately treated with Hormone Replacement Therapy (nothing at all to do with the thyroid) I found that the thyroid hormones had settled back to normal. The pendulum had settled down to its usual swing. So alterations in the stress hormones may be expected to produce changes in the other hormonal systems and the sex hormones are no exception.

The third group that synchronises its menstrual periods produces that effect by some mysterious sort of subconscious togetherness. This is more difficult to explain but may in time be attributed to pheromones. These are a kind of hormonal odour that is subconsciously detected and may well change during the menstrual cycle. It is possible that there is some pull to synchronise the pheromones and thus the mainline hormones, including those that deal with the menstrual cycle, in a group of people who live in close intimate contact.

From the three different groups of women mentioned above it seems to be possible to change the balance of the sex hormones by enlisting the resources of your subconscious mind to change them. Therefore it should also be possible to change them when you want to and for your benefit so that the hormonal changes do not produce irritable bowel syndrome. Some years ago I performed a very small pilot study and found that nine out of a group of ten of my women patients improved their Premenstrual Tension by using a self-empowering technique that later grew into Brief Contact Therapy.

Herbal Remedies

Research in Complementary Therapies

As the whole point of this little book is self-help the only preparations mentioned are herbal remedies that need no doctor's prescription and are widely available in herbal and health shops. The criteria for their mention will however be as rigorous as those used for the doctor's approval of a mainstream drug.

The two herbal preparations that will be mentioned have been shown to be successful in randomised double blind placebo controlled studies. That fearsome title means that any biasing effect of the doctor is removed because neither the patient nor the doctor knows whether the pill given is a dummy pill or the real herbal preparation. This means that the doctor cannot fiddle the results by being enthusiastic about the active herbal preparation and dismissive about the dummy pill. Each patient is randomly put into one of the two groups for this treatment, one taking the dummy pill and one taking the active pill. Again because neither the doctor nor the patient knows whether the pill they are taking is dummy or not, the patient cannot be influenced in favour of one pill or the other. In the ideal study they would be matched for age, sex, and severity of the irritable bowel syndrome. This is difficult especially as the researchers would need to know beforehand exactly how bad the irritable bowel syndrome of each participant was. Irritable bowel syndrome is frequently so variable in each sufferer it would be very difficult to match patients.

Age and sex matching is less difficult. For instance if the dummy pill group had a forty year old woman then the active pill group should also include a forty year old woman.

This kind of research is regarded as the gold standard in mainstream medicine and is appropriate when the patient has to swallow something where a sugar pill, which looks identical to the real pill, can be used to "blind"

it's identity to both doctor and patient. It is not possible to "blind" the doctor and patient when using talking or massage therapies because it is impossible to pretend to talk or massage. Any control group would have to have "ineffective " massage or talking and it would be obvious that this was not the proper therapy.

Also "ineffective " massage or talking could also be considered a treatment in its own right and so it could not possibly be considered to be equivalent to a sugar pill as used in drug trials in mainstream medicine. This is one of the reasons that research in complementary therapies is not recognised by most mainstream doctors who will only accept the randomised double blind placebo controlled trial as "proper" research.

However, the one method which does work for complementary therapy is the before and after model where the patient who has irritable bowel syndrome keeps a diary for a reasonable length of time (Ideally 12 weeks) then has the treatment and continues with the diary for another 12 weeks. If the treatment is effective and the measures of irritable bowel syndrome severity and frequency are plotted on a graph this would show a straight baseline for the first (untreated) period and as the irritable bowel syndrome improved in frequency and severity there would be a sloping line showing gradual improvement during the treatment period. That is indeed what the research with the Brief Contact Therapy tapes showed and was the research model used.

Why Herbal Remedies for Irritable Bowel Syndrome?

That question could be put the other way round, why not modern pharmaceuticals for irritable bowel syndrome? There are a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, because the only effective modern mainline drugs are "prescription only" you would need to see a doctor in order to access them; and our remit is determinedly self-help.

Secondly, most of the relevant modern drugs have side effects that often make them unacceptable or even dangerous and

Thirdly the drugs used to attempt to prevent irritable bowel syndrome seem not to work too well.

It is worth remembering that drugs started life as herbal extracts, digitalis from foxgloves and aspirin from willow are two good examples of this, and it is only in the past hundred years that they have been developed synthetically. The main problem however is that modern medicine is a reductionist activity

I must explain what I mean.

If, for example, if I was to ask you where was the true site of Beethoven's ninth symphony, you would wonder what I was talking about, but it is a fair question.

Does the true site of that work reside in Beethoven's brain, the notes on the score, the thoughts in the conductors mind, the thoughts in the performers' mind, the instruments on which it is played, the airwaves that propagate it through the air to your ear, the brainwaves in your head while you listen or the effects those waves produce in your mind. If you are listening on a radio or a recorded cd at home or to a live performance or there are a few more layers or levels to add to those choices.

This may seem an unimportant and exotic set of choices but it is really quite important in many areas of human knowledge.

The reductionist holds the belief that only one or perhaps two of these choices really matter and will explore only the musical notes, examining, poring over, and dissecting them until the essentials are found. The herbal reductionists, the drug companies, look for those elements that they believe to be the active parts and then proceed to manufacture an 'equivalent' using only those active ingredients.

At the opposite extreme we have the holist who is a person who considers all parts of the equation and will recognise that the ultimate pleasure of listening to Beethoven's score requires that all the elements be

left intact. He would say that the answer to the question of the site of the music was all of those alternatives equally; that each level had its place and without each level there would be no music. He knows that he cannot take any single part away or the music will not be the same.

Similarly, the holistic practitioner knows that mind, body and soul are equal and indivisible and would regard the equal treatment of each aspect to be vital in helping any health problem including irritable bowel syndrome. The holistic herbalist will accept that there may be some elements in a plant's make up which may not be necessary but he also accepts that the most important elements need the others to make it do its job properly.

Modern drugs also suffer from this reductionist problem. It is well known that aspirin was isolated from the bark of willow trees but at that time there was an assumption made that the aspirin component, because it worked, was the only active ingredient. That has never been proven and is illogical. Below I mention the evidence for feverfew and it seems that the negative trials used an over purified extract from which some active substance may have been removed making the herbal remedy ineffective.

When we consider what we eat we can again look at the design limitations of our bodies as we did when we looked at food intolerance. Just as eating nonhuman milk violates the body's design limitations so does the eating of a hyper pure extract in the context of herbal remedies.

Perhaps we can usefully learn from the medicine men in so-called "primitive" societies who know the value of extracts of the local trees and plants and have little care for extracting the hyper pure active substance. It is clearly important to standardise the extracts used so that each pill or bottle contains the same amount of active ingredients and you can safely take today's dose in the knowledge that if you have one pill today it will be exactly as "strong" as yesterday's or tomorrow's but this is not what is meant by hyper pure extracts.

Hyper pure extracts are what modern medicine did to willow bark when it analysed all the constituents and in discovering aspirin may well have

thrown out other things that would have helped. Furthermore those other things may well have worked with the aspirin in a way that made the combination just as effective as pure aspirin but could have allowed much less aspirin to be used. That could have made a much safer compound aspirin product that was free of the side effects produced by that drug. It is probably true to say that because of those side effects aspirin would be unlikely to get a licence from the regulatory authorities if it was a new drug today.

None of our food is purified like this and we are designed to eat a cocktail of unpurified and intact plant and animal foodstuffs.

Herbal remedies fit well with the holistic concept of this regime and that mentioned below is an important part of the process.

Mint

Mint has been shown in a number of studies to be more effective than placebo in treating Irritable bowel syndrome. It is thought that it relaxes the spasm of the smooth muscle surrounding the bowel wall that is responsible for the colicky pain and bloating. It is important to take the mint in enteric-coated tablets because the mint may irritate the stomach when taken in sufficient quantity to be effective.

It is therefore the first choice for the holistic regime for irritable bowel syndrome

Herbal Preparations for PMT

A recent study published in the British Medical Journal found that an extract of Agnus Castus fruit produced a 50% reduction in the symptoms of Premenstrual Syndrome (including abdominal pains) in half of the women taking part in the study. It reported only a few mild side effects. This study was performed using a double blind placebo controlled model and its publication in the British Medical Journal adds medical scientific credibility to

its results. The report's authors conclude, "It should be considered a therapeutic option".

As it acts on the hormone system it should not be taken together with any other hormonal preparation.

The More Complete Advice: - Stage 4

1 Take Enteric coated mint tablets for six months.

2 If your symptoms are related to female hormones consider Agnus Castus

Section 4

The Full Regime in One Place

Phase 1: - Keep a diary covering at least four distinct irritable bowel syndrome attacks and look closely at the 48 hours before each attack to identify any common factors. Eliminate those factors.

As soon as phase 1 is finished: - Strictly exclude milk and milk products for eighteen months. Exclude egg white, yeast, almonds and cashew nuts for six months. Avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and drink alcohol in moderation

At the same time: - Sort out a routine and build in exercise, sort out a stressor a day, Listen to your cd or mp3 according to its instructions.

At the same time: - Take enteric-coated mint tablets for six months, consider Agnus Castus if you are a woman and your problem is cyclic.

There is no time like the present, so please don't put off the start of becoming irritable bowel syndrome free

Today	Start diary
After 4 distinct Attacks Of irritable bowel syndrome	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Eliminate triggers 2 Exclude milk, egg white, yeast, almonds and cashew nuts 3 Moderate alcohol and avoid anti-inflammatory drugs 4 Start a routine 5 Sort out a stressor a day 6 Listen to the cd or mp3 daily 7 Start Enteric coated mint tablets or Agnus Castus
After six months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Reintroduce almond, cashew nuts, egg white and yeast one at a time and with small portions at first. If irritable bowel syndrome returns or worsens exclude them for six more months 2 Stop enteric coated mint tablets 3 Reduce listening to the cd or mp3 to a “need to do so” basis
After Eighteen Months	1 Reintroduce milk products with very small portions first. If irritable bowel syndrome returns or worsens exclude them for six more months

By then the routines that you use should be established. If your life circumstances change and the irritable bowel syndrome returns you may need to review the system from the beginning. If all is well you should by now be eating and drinking what you like and have a healthy lifestyle with much reduced irritable bowel syndrome or hopefully none at all.

I hope that this helps you to lose your irritable bowel syndrome NOW!

Warning

This book is not intended to be a do-it-yourself diagnostic kit. All abdominal pains should be taken seriously and should be properly diagnosed by a doctor who can take an accurate medical history and examine you. The use of the recommendations in this book comes very firmly after the correct diagnosis of irritable bowel syndrome has been made. The contents of the book deal with the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome by complementary methods. The explanations given are intended to inform, empower and allow you to help yourself only after a proper diagnosis has been made.

Useful Addresses

1 Irritable Bowel Syndrome Network,

www.ibsnetwork.org.uk.

The self-help group for IBS.

2 Shared Care

www.shared-care.com

Please see www.shared-care.com/Issues/Health/IrritableBowelSyndrome for links to all sorts of information about support, professional groups, therapies practitioners and even restaurants that are allergy aware.

See this site for fuller information on all aspects of FISH