

SIBO

What is SIBO

Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth is when excessive amounts of bacteria from the colon infiltrate the small intestine. The small intestine and stomach should be sterile as the upper gut is focused on digestion and producing digestive enzymes (hydrochloric acid in the stomach and pancreatic enzymes in the small intestine). The large bowel or lower gut contains all the bacteria needed for fermentation of fibre. When these bacteria move up into the upper gut, digestion is compromised and fermentation occurs earlier. This leads to the typical symptoms of SIBO:

- Poor digestion with undigested food in the stool
- Feeling bloated after eating
- Gas
- Pain
- Food intolerances esp. towards sugars, fruits and vegetables
- Many other symptoms

Why Does SIBO Happen in the First Place

The most common reason is low stomach acid brought on by chronic stress or over-use of antacids/antibiotics. Constipation or irregular bowel motions, poor dental/oral hygiene, chronic throat/tonsil infections, poor ileocecal valve function, etc. are other important factors to consider.

What To Do

The upper gut has to be sterilized first. Everything you might be taking to improve the lower bowel will be used up the microbes in the upper gut, rendering them ineffective and possibly feeding the wrong microbes. This could be a big factor why seemingly appropriate treatments sometimes do not work or may even make the symptoms worse.

Simple Lifestyle Changes

While your healthcare practitioner is working on a program for you there are some simple things you can do to help yourself as well:

- **Don't snack in between meals** and use intermittent fasting – The small intestine produces cleansing waves via MMC (Migrating Motor Complex) every 90 – 120 minutes during times of fasting. These waves help to eliminate toxins from the small intestine. If you continually snack this doesn't happen. Some studies have shown 80% improvement in gut-symptoms just by doing this. Aim for 3 – 5 hours between meals.
- **Reduce sugars, starches and fibres** as these will feed the fermentation process in the small intestine. This leaves less fermentable products for the lower bowel bacteria, so stool formation doesn't happen and you end up with either diarrhea or pebbly stools and constipation.
- A certain subset of people might also have to **go easy on the fats**, at least at first.
- **Improve your digestion** – You can do this through the use of enzymes such as betaine hydrochloride, amylase, protease, lipase, etc. or foods such as aloe vera juice, apple cider vinegar, lemon juice or Swedish bitters taken before meals. Enzymes help to digest food so there is less fermentable material available, breaks down biofilm that could encourage microbe growth, improve pH levels in the gut, destroy certain organisms and refocus the upper gut on DIGESTION instead of FERMENTATION.
- **Improve the pH** – Take bicarb soda in between meals.

Diets

The most effective diets to date for treating SIBO includes GAPS, SCD and Elemental diet.