



**WEITZ SPORTS  
CHIROPRACTIC AND NUTRITION**

# How to Reduce Digestive Distress

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→ Do you have digestive distress?

→ Do you suffer from:

gas  
abdominal pain  
bloating  
acid reflux  
constipation  
diarrhea  
general abdominal discomfort?

...keep reading to find relief!

You should always see a Medical Doctor, such as your Internist, or a Gastroenterologist (a specialist of digestive disorders) when you have symptoms that last for more than a few days to help with a proper diagnosis and to rule out some of the most dangerous causes of digestive distress, such as Crohn's disease, celiac disease, intestinal obstruction, and cancer. You should also see a Functional Medicine practitioner like myself to get the preventative/nutritional approach to your condition and get the functional testing done to uncover the root cause of your condition. You may need stool testing, SIBO breath testing, breath or other testing for H pylori, organic acids testing, or Food Sensitivity testing, etc. and have those results interpreted by a Functional Medicine practitioner. Until you do, you can try taking the steps outlined in this booklet to reduce your digestive symptoms.

## 1 Follow a Modified Low FODMAP Diet

The following diet is a modified version of the Low FODMAP diet that has been found to be effective in controlling symptoms in a number of digestive disorders, including Irritable Bowel Syndrome and Inflammatory Bowel Disease.(1,2) This restricted diet is only to be followed for no more than one month, since it excludes too many healthy foods to be followed for a long period of time. FODMAPs are foods that contain fermentable, poorly absorbed short-chain carbohydrates and they are metabolized by bacteria in your intestinal tract and fermented, producing gas and bloating and abdominal discomfort and possibly diarrhea or constipation.

These sugars have been given the acronym **FODMAP**, that stands for:

**F**ermentable  
**O**ligosaccharides—fructans (such as found in wheat, onions, garlic, inulin and galacto-oligosaccharides (GOS))  
**D**issaccharides—lactose found in dairy foods  
**M**onosaccharides--fructose  
**A**nd  
**P**olyols—sugar alcohols, including sorbitol, mannitol, maltitol, and xylitol. These are found in avocado, apricots, cherries, nectarines, peaches and plums, as well as in sugarless gum and sugar free drinks.

# Foods to Avoid

(for a limited period)

In other words, for a **limited period of time**, I recommend that you stop eating the following foods, which are high in FODMAPs:

## A. Avoid the following grain foods:

1. Wheat (bread, pasta, bagels, most cereals, flour tortillas)
2. rye
3. barley
4. couscous
5. triticale
6. spelt
7. kamut

B. Avoid all legumes, ie. beans and lentils, including peanuts, (which are actually legumes and not nuts), with the exception of a small serving (1/4 cup) of hummus daily that is usually well tolerated. However, if you notice gas or bloating or abdominal pain following eating it, then skip the hummus as well.

C. Avoid most dairy products, including most cow's milk products, including yogurt, goat's milk, sheep's milk, and goat's milk. This includes avoiding many cheeses, including cream cheese, cottage cheese, ricotta, mozzarella, marscapone, American, feta, and goat cheese. Aged cheeses like blue, brie, camembert, cheddar, Colby, feta, harvati, mozzarella, parmesan, and swiss are very low in lactose and are usually ok on a low FODMAP diet, if consumed in small quantities. This is not to say that some people are not sensitive to even very small amounts of lactose or that they might not have some sensitivity or allergies to cheese. If this is you, then please do not eat any cheese or dairy.

## D. Avoid the following vegetables:

1. artichoke
2. asparagus
3. beets
4. broccoli (can eat up to ½ cup per day)
5. brussels sprouts (can eat up to ½ cup per day)
6. button mushrooms
7. cabbage
8. cauliflower
9. chicory
10. fennel
11. garlic
12. green bell pepper
13. leek
14. mushroom
15. okra
16. onion
17. shallots
18. snow peas
19. spring onion
20. sweet corn

## E. Avoid the following fruits:

1. apple
2. apricot
3. avocado (can eat up to ¼ medium avocado)
4. blackberry
5. cherry
6. concentrated fruit sources
7. dried fruit
8. mango
9. nectarine

10. peach
11. pear
12. persimmon
13. plum
14. prune
15. canned fruit in juice
16. watermelon

## F. Avoid the following miscellaneous foods:

1. chicory
2. inulin
3. pistachio nuts

## G. Avoid the following sweeteners:

1. Sorbitol
2. Mannitol
3. Maltitol
4. Xylitol
5. High fructose corn syrup
6. Fructose
7. Honey (is high in fructose)
8. Agave nectar
9. Isomalt

## H. Avoid the following drinks:

1. Fruit juice with apple, pear, or mango juice
2. Coffee substitutes

# Foods to Eat

(Low FODMAPs)

The following foods are fine to eat, since they have very little or no FODMAPs:

**A. You can eat the following protein foods**

1. All game meats
2. Beef
3. Pork
4. Chicken
5. Turkey
6. Fish
7. Eggs
8. Tofu

**B. You can eat the following grain foods:**

1. Rice (brown, black, wild, white, rice cakes)
2. Quinoa
3. Sorghum
4. Millet
5. Corn and corn meal
6. Tapioca
7. Gluten free oats
8. Gluten free bread and cereal products
9. Buckwheat
10. Arrowroot
11. Rice noodles, soba (buckwheat) noodles, gluten free pasta

**C. You can eat the following milk alternatives:**

1. Coconut milk
2. Almond milk (with no carrageenan)
3. Hemp milk
4. Gluten free oat milk

**D. You can eat the following vegetables:**

1. alfalfa
2. alfalfa sprouts
3. arugula
4. bamboo shoots
5. bean sprouts
6. beets (limit 4 slices)
7. bok choy
8. broccoli (½ cup)
9. brussels sprouts (<½ cup)
10. butternut squash (<¼ cup)
11. carrot
12. celery
13. chives
14. corn
15. cucumber
16. eggplant
17. endive
18. ginger
19. green beans
20. kale
21. lettuce
22. olives
23. parsnip
24. peas (<1/4 cup)
25. potato
26. pumpkin
27. radish
28. red bell pepper
29. rutabaga
30. scallions (green portion)
31. spinach
32. summer squash
33. sweet potato (< ½ cup)
34. swiss chard
35. turnips

**E. You can eat the following nuts and seeds:**

1. Almonds
2. Walnuts
3. Pecans
4. Macadamias
5. Pine nuts
6. Pumpkin seeds
7. Sunflower seeds
8. Sesame seeds
9. Chia seeds
10. Flax seeds

**F. You can eat the following sweeteners:**

1. Stevia
2. Sucrose (white table sugar, brown sugar, maple syrup)
3. Glucose

**G. You can eat the following fruits:**

1. avocado (Don't eat more than ¼ medium size avocado per day).
2. Banana
3. Blueberry
4. Boysenberry
5. Cantaloupe
6. Cranberry
7. Coconut
8. Dragonfruit
9. Grapes
10. Grapefruit (< ¼ fruit)
11. Honeydew
12. Kiwi
13. Lemon
14. Lime
15. Mandarin

16. Melon
17. Orange
18. Papaya
19. Passion fruit
20. Pineapple
21. Raspberry
22. Rhubarb
23. Star anise
24. Star fruit
25. Strawberries

**H. You can eat the following healthy oils and butters:**

1. Avocado oil
2. Coconut oil/butter
3. Flaxseed oil/butter
4. Grapeseed oil
5. Ghee
6. Macadamia nut oil
7. Olive oil
8. Sesame oil
9. Walnut oil
10. Hemp seed butter
11. Chia seed butter

**I. You can drink the following beverages:**

1. coffee
2. tea
3. water

## 2 Eat Slowly and Mindfully

In addition, I want you to make sure that you eat slowly in a relaxed environment and chew your food carefully. Chew each bite 20 times before swallowing it. Keeping the food in your mouth longer and chewing slowly will improve digestion, as this will allow the enzymes in the saliva to start breaking down the food. The more you chew, the more you can break down the food into smaller pieces, which is the first step of digestion.

Wolfing down your food, as many of us do, will mean that your food will not get properly broken down and it will be difficult for your gut to digest and assimilate your food. This can lead to intestinal upset and discomfort. A chunk of undigested food that makes its way into the small intestines may lead to this undigested bolus being pushed back up to where it came from, acid and all, which is what we refer to as acid reflux.

You should avoid eating on the run, in your car, or feeling rushed while eating, as this will stimulate your sympathetic nervous system to be activated. You should have a relaxed state of mind when you eat, so that your parasympathetic nervous system is dominant. Our sympathetic nervous system activates our fight or flight response, aka as our sympatho-adrenal response. While walking across the savanna and confronting a saber-toothed tiger, this response becomes activated, resulting in increased heart rate and blood pressure, increased blood flow to the skeletal muscles, and dilation of the pupils of the eye, facilitating fighting or running from the tiger. There is decreased blood flow to the digestive tract and other internal organs, as these functions are lower priority now. Digestion is impaired, as you get decreased peristaltic activity of the intestines and decreased secretion of digestive enzymes. There is no time for digestion if you want to avoid becoming lunch for the tiger. This will likely make your intestinal symptoms and condition potentially worse.

Many of us eat while doing other things, such as driving, watching television, or working on the computer. We are barely aware that we are eating. This leads to poor digestion and overeating. You should eat mindfully, which means that you should be fully present and pay attention to the flavor, texture, color, and sound of the food you are eating. You should focus on eating food that is both satisfying and nourishing to your body. When you eat mindfully, you learn to eat when you are hungry and to stop when you are satisfied. You will learn to enjoy the taste of healthy food. And you will digest and assimilate your food and the nutrients contained in that meal more successfully.

## 3 Additional Tips to Reduce Symptoms

The following tips are some tips and suggestions for some foods, procedures and supplements that you can take that may be beneficial in modulating your digestive symptoms until you can identify the root cause of your condition and find a longer term solution. Most of these choices are healthier than the over-the-counter pharmaceutical options many use for symptom control, such as laxatives, (like MiraLax), and acid blocking agents, (like Prilosec). Please do not use these tips in place of seeing a doctor, especially since some of these digestive symptoms could indicate a more serious condition.

### To Improve Digestion

It may be a good idea to take some digestive enzymes or some herbal bitters prior to eating as this often aids digestion. Undigested proteins are more likely to cause food sensitivities and undigested fats and carbohydrates may cause gastric upset or pain and taking digestive enzymes can help. It is best to take a digestive enzyme that that helps to break down proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. There are many good products on the market, but I recommend Spectrazyme Complete from Metagenics or Digestzyme from Designs For Health. Take 1-2 tablets or capsules prior to eating each meal.

You might also take Betaine HCl with Pepsin, which can help with protein digestion, such as Metagest from Metagenics. Some digestive enzymes also include HCL, such as the Digestzyme. Bitters stimulate your natural production of enzymes. If you are working with a Functional Medicine practitioner or a gastroenterologist, you should check with her or him before using these. These should never be a substitute for seeing a doctor and getting your condition properly diagnosed.

### To Relieve Abdominal Pain

If you are getting minor abdominal pain, until you can get to see a gastroenterologist, you might try using enteric coated peppermint oil capsules. I like the Intesol product from Metagenics that contains chamomile flower extract and lavender flower oil along with peppermint oil. Peppermint or chamomile tea can also be helpful.

Performing a light stomach and intestinal massage may also be helpful. Here is a procedure that is attributed to a pamphlet published in 1985 by Dr. Stephen Chang:

1. Lie flat on your back on a firm surface.
2. Warm up your hands by rubbing them together until they feel hot.
3. Place one hand flat on your belly button.

4. Begin rubbing in small, clockwise circles around your belly button, gradually widening the circles using a firm pressure. Each circle should take 1-2 seconds.
5. Focus on the heat, which builds up in your abdominal region as you rub.
6. Perform for two minutes, about 40-50 circles. Be sure to keep your stomach warm during exercise.

If you get gas and bloating on a short term, symptomatic basis, you might try using activated charcoal—2 tablets every 2-3 hours away from meals and away from other supplements. I recommend the charcoal product from Integrative Therapeutics.

### Reducing Constipation

If you are suffering from short term constipation, until you can get to see your MD, you might try taking magnesium citrate or magnesium oxide at night starting with 500 mg and slowly increasing the dosage until you break the constipation cycle, but do not exceed 2000 mg. Do not take magnesium with calcium. It must be magnesium citrate or magnesium oxide. Other forms of magnesium will not work as well. Drink with at least two large glasses of water. Magnesium is both a natural muscle relaxant for the smooth bowel muscles and it also increases the amount of water in the colon, which serves as a stool softener. This water pooling capacity of magnesium is referred to as an osmotic laxative. Be careful, though, since too much magnesium will cause you diarrhea.

Here are some additional tips to reduce constipation:

- Increase fiber intake, especially insoluble fiber. You can take a powdered fiber supplement in water or fiber capsules, though the powder makes it easier to get the dosage you will need. If you take a powdered fiber, like Metafiber from Metagenics, use one to two scoops in water twice per day apart from meals and supplements. If you choose capsules, you may need to take as many as 10-15 capsules several times per day. Please drink two additional glasses of water immediately after taking the fiber. While psyllium is a soluble fiber, it is also very effective for relieving constipation. Ground flax seeds is an especially good fiber source and due to their fat levels, they help to lubricate the colon. Chia seeds are another good option.
- Drink warm water with lemon, esp. when you first get up in the morning. A cup of organic coffee often helps to stimulate the bowels. Coffee enemas are even more effective.
- Aloe Vera juice can be helpful for short term usage. Drink 1-2 glasses of aloe vera juice in the morning and evening.
- Physical exercise helps to stimulate peristaltic activity in the digestive tract. Any form of exercise can be helpful, including jogging, running, swimming, jumping on a mini trampoline, stretching, and yoga. I have also found that doing abdominal strengthening exercises, such as crunches, reverse crunches, and twisting rotational exercises, very helpful.

### Helping With Diarrhea

Supplement with activated charcoal up to 2 tablets every couple of hours. Certain forms of clay can also be used, mixed into distilled water, and drunk three times per day.

Eat some yogurt with active cultures, esp. homemade yogurt, at least ½ cup per serving 1-2 times per day. Consume other fermented foods that contain healthy bacteria, such as sauerkraut or other fermented vegetables. Supplement with probiotics daily. I prefer a multi-strain product that includes *Saccromyces boulardii* and other scientifically validated strains, such as Ultraflora Spectrum from Metagenics.

Take an electrolyte supplement, since diarrhea leads a loss of minerals (referred to as electrolytes) as well as a loss of water. The minerals lost most are sodium, potassium, and magnesium.

Increase calcium, but not magnesium levels. Take a pure calcium supplement, say 500-800 mg twice per day. Calcium tends to bind your stool.

Soluble fiber can potentially bind your stool and make it firmer, such as cellulose. I like the Cellulose Fiber from Vital Nutrients or the Herbulk from Metagenics. Use one to two scoops in water twice per day apart from meals or supplements.

### Relief of Reflux

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disorder, aka GERD, is a common symptom and is often secondary to SIBO or some other digestive disorder that will need to be addressed first. But until you see a MD and a Functional Medicine practitioner, here are some simple steps that should help reduce your symptoms for a few days till you can seek professional advice:

For immediate relief, chew some chewable calcium tablets or drink 1 tablespoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of water. Follow this with several glasses of water.

Some cases of acid reflux are paradoxically caused by not enough Hydrochloric Acid (HCL) being produced in the stomach, thus leading to decreased digestion of your food. Try taking Betaine HCL tablets or capsules prior to meals containing protein foods, such as Metagest from Metagenics. If you get a burning pain in your stomach, stop taking this and use some baking soda in water to neutralize the acid. Alternatively, you can also use digestive enzymes instead of pure HCL and I like Digestzymes, from Designs For Health, since it contains not only protein, fat, and carbohydrate enzymes, along with a small amount of HCL and some ox bile, which helps with fat digestion. Another alternative is to use Herbal Bitters prior to meals to stimulate your body to secrete digestive enzymes.

Apple Cider Vinegar: 1 tablespoon in a glass of water before meals.

If you are reclining or laying down and experience reflux, prop your body up or sit or stand up, as gravity will help to reverse the direction of the gastric juices. If this is during the day, go for a walk, as gravity and the rhythmic activity of the body will assist the peristaltic activity of the intestines.

## Reintroduction of Foods

If you are feeling better after a few weeks or a month on the modified low FODMAP diet, slowly start adding back the foods that you have been restricting. Add foods one at a time and see if they create any adverse symptoms. If a food creates digestive distress, such as pain or gas or bloating, then stop eating it again and try eating it a few days later. If you notice similar symptoms, then this is likely a food that you have a sensitivity or allergy to and you should avoid eating, unless you get food sensitivity testing done and find out that you do not have sensitivity to it. A good Functional Medicine doctor or nutritionist can guide you through this food reintroduction process.

Either way, unless you are feeling better after a month, you should see a good Functional Medicine doctor as well as a Gastroenterologist (an MD who specializes in digestive disorders) and get a consultation with each and some testing to figure out what are some of the underlying causes or triggers for your symptoms and condition. Getting a diagnosis is important, but don't get too caught up in giving your condition a name. More important to figure out what some of the underlying causes of your symptoms are and a strategy that help your body improve and heal. Not that symptom control is a bad thing, but just reducing symptoms is often all that happens in Western medicine. It is better to figure out what the underlying cause of your problem is, so that you can correct it and not have to take medications, that often have unpleasant side effects, for the rest of your life.

## References:

1. de Roest RH, Dobbs BR, Chapman BA, et al. (2013), The low FODMAP diet improves gastrointestinal symptoms in patients with irritable bowel syndrome: a prospective study. *Int J Clin Pract*, 2013; 67: 895–903.
2. Geary RB, Irving PM, Barrett JS, et al., Reduction of dietary poorly absorbed short-chain carbohydrates (FODMAPs) improves abdominal symptoms in patients with inflammatory bowel disease—a pilot study. *J Crohns Colitis* 2009; 3 (1): 8-14.



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