



# IBS SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

2011 April Issue

## Celebrate World Digestive Health Day At IBS SG's Public Forum

In conjunction with World Digestive Health Day, IBS Support Group will be coming together with VITAGEN and Parkway Health to organize a Public Forum focusing on Digestive Health for Mother and Child.

Here's what IBS SG's President, Dr Gwee Kok Ann, has to say about this:

Mothers nurture us from the moment we are conceived, and from the moment we are born, teach us how to look after our health. Perhaps the most important lesson that a mother can pass to her child is how to care for the digestive system.

We should pay attention to having our meals at regular times. We should learn how to select foods appropriate to our individual needs and constitution. We should have a bowel routine. And yet, one of the commonest digestive problems that mothers and children encounter is the irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

People who suffer from IBS experience tummy pain and irregular bowel habits. The causes of IBS are frequently blamed on dietary factors, food allergy or food intolerance. Therefore, the IBS Support Group would like to reach out to mothers who are interested to learn more to help themselves or their children who have these problems.

We are fortunate to have the generous support of VITAGEN International to help us to organise this educational programme. We are also happy that we can help to celebrate World Digestive Health Day by sharing with you information on the public event which will be held in conjunction with our event. I look forward to welcoming you to hear and learn from our experts on digestive health for mother and child.

Yours sincerely,

**A/Prof Gwee Kok Ann,**  
President, IBS Support Group

### PUBLIC FORUM "Digestive Health for Mother and Child"

Date : 28 May 2011  
Venue : Holiday Inn,  
Orchard City Centre  
Time : 1 - 4 pm  
(FREE for IBS SG members)  
Register today with Angel at  
[ibssupport@gmail.com](mailto:ibssupport@gmail.com)



## "Doc, Can I Try This..."

**Dr Reuben KM Wong, Consultant Gastroenterologist and Assistant Professor at the National University Health System talks about whether Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is helpful for IBS.**

The treatment of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is very much a science in evolution, and to date, no single modality of treatment or "magic pill" has evolved. Indeed, many physicians find IBS one of the most frustrating conditions to manage, with most focusing their treatment on symptom control using a variety of pharmaceutical means, often with a poor outcome. From the patient's perspective, they are frustrated by the doctors' inability to find an organic problem, with multiple tests coming back as negative, and yet their symptoms are very real. Many of them either feel that the medicine they are on does not work, or they simply do not want to be on long-term medication. Therefore, it's no surprise that many patients turn to Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) as a treatment for their symptoms, or even in their quest for a "cure" to their IBS.

### Is there any evidence for CAM in IBS?

CAM can be defined as any form of non-conventional treatment that is not based on the standard percepts of modern day Western medicine such as herbal remedies, homeopathy, acupuncture, physical manipulation techniques such as massage or "holistic" healing such as yoga.

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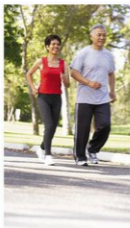
## IBS SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

The CAM options employed are very much shaped by the societal and cultural norms of the patient, and so it's not uncommon to see differences in CAM methods used for the same condition in patients coming from different backgrounds. CAM has been growing in popularity, and it's been estimated that between 1997 and 2002 approximately 35% of the US population have reported using it. An estimated \$34 billion a year is spent by US consumers on CAM therapies.

IBS is a classic condition where patients often turn to alternative therapy options. A study done by our team at UNC showed 38.4% of IBS patients used some form of CAM, with herbal supplements, massage therapy and yoga being the top three therapies utilized. However, very few doctors actually prescribe CAM, and so patients usually seek and obtain these alternative therapies without medical advice, and often without their physician's knowledge.

### What are some of the issues with CAM?

In modern Western Medicine, almost all of our prescription drugs have undergone a rigorous system of tests before approval by the FDA. These screen for efficacy (how well the treatment works) and potential adverse effects based on trials in animals and humans. With CAM, there is no requirement for such testing and regulation. As such, many of the success stories with CAM have been based on "word of mouth" or anecdotal evidence, and have not been verified or reproduced in clinical trials, so it has been difficult to quantify the efficacy of a given therapy. Similarly, the side-effects are often unknown, and when they do occur often go unrecognized.



Many of the CAM remedies are "individualized" by the practitioners, and it is almost impossible to determine the active component within the medication, much less determine their exact mode of action. A good example of this has been the use of traditional Chinese herbs in the treatment of IBS. A number of rigorous trials have been undertaken by researchers which highlight a number of learning points –

Firstly, the active ingredients of herbs are often unknown, making it impossible to pinpoint which was the chemical component which worked. Secondly, standardization of dose and frequency has been difficult. To compound matters, many herbal and homeopathic cures are a combination of differing herbs and extracts, and the concoction is often "tailored" to the individual patient rather than being based on a standard set formula.

Thirdly, treatment of functional gastrointestinal diseases such as IBS often have a large placebo effect; An analysis looking at major CAM treatment trials in IBS patients estimates the average placebo effect as 42%. As such, it's difficult to tell if it's the treatment that's working or it's a subjective improvement in symptoms based on the anticipation of a positive outcome.

### So what should I do?

Does this mean that CAM has no role in the treatment of IBS? Certainly not. What we are advocating is a judicious and well-considered approach before embarking on any treatment, and this includes any CAM therapy.

Firstly, make a well informed decision. This involves knowledge of IBS and the chronic nature of the disease. Take any cures that scream "100% instant & immediate cure" with a big pinch of salt!

Also, perform a "due diligence" search of any treatment you are considering – with the advent of the internet and search engines, this has never been easier. Speak to people (not just one person!) who have tried the remedy you are contemplating, and get as broad a perspective as you can on it.

Some of the main CAM therapies undertaken by patients with IBS, as found by the UNC study, include:

1. Herbal Remedies
2. Massage therapy
3. Yoga
4. Homeopathy
5. Aromatherapy
6. Acupuncture
7. Hypnosis

Secondly, understand the basis for the CAM, and ensure you are comfortable with it. Some alternative treatment options have strong religious or cultural roots that may clash with your own beliefs. You should never be coerced into a treatment that you are personally uncomfortable with.

Consider the risk-benefit ratio of the treatment you are considering. FDA regulations require the side-effects and interactions of drugs be declared, but there are no such requirements for CAM, and so you have to be aware there may be potential risks with ingested herbs and concoctions, such as Drug Induced Liver Injury. There may be inherent potential risks associated with a particular treatment, for example, if you are undergoing acupuncture, ensure your therapist uses only new needles to avoid the transmission of Hepatitis B or C. Ask about what the CAM entails and ensure that you have no existing health issues that may be unsuitable with the treatment you are undertaking, for example an intensive exclusion diet in a pregnant IBS patient.

Sit down and work out the financial cost and time investment in the therapy is something you are prepared to undertake. Multiple regular sessions may be required, or there may be extensive costs involved in purchasing remedies or for therapy sessions.

Finally, always keep your doctor informed about any CAM treatment you are undertaking. This may seem counter-intuitive, and there is always a fear by many patients that they would be berated for dabbling in "alternative stuff". In reality, most physicians would respect a patient's right to seek alternative treatment, and may even be able to share their own perspective on it.

Ultimately, in your battle against IBS, your doctor should be your best advocate!

(Originally published in the DIGEST, a publication of the University of North Carolina Centre for Functional GI & Motility Disorders)

## Get Rid Of IBS By Eating Right! :)

**Here is one CAM that worked for Shirley, who has been suffering from IBS for more than 20 years. Due to popular demand, we are reprinting her story in our newsletter for those who might not have read it from our Facebook page.**

I have been suffering from IBS for more than 20 years and often felt very uncomfortable after every meal. After my meals, I would often feel bloated and lose my appetite for the rest of the day.

In 2006, I read a book by Dr Helbert Shelton about food combination. Following the suggestions that he made, I made some alteration to my diet. From that day onwards, I was completely free from IBS. I would like to share with you this wonderful method that worked immediately for my IBS.



### The "Secret Recipe" is:

**(1) Eat fruits alone.** It is best to eat one type of fruits at any given time instead of a variety of different fruits at one go. Fruits require typically no digestion at all while foods that are protein or carbohydrate in nature take much longer. If mixed with something else, the digestion process for fruits gets slowed down. As a result, fruits will rot and produce discomfort and gas in our stomachs.

**(2) Eat starchy foods like rice, bread, noodles with green leafy vegetables. Do not eat starch and protein foods at the same meal.** Acidic foods like meat and seafood will neutralize the alkaline medium required to digest starches. If you eat these together, digestion is stalled, fermentation takes place and results in flatulence.

(Cont on page 4)



## IBS SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

**(3) Eat protein foods like fish, meat and nuts with green leafy vegetables.** Do not eat protein foods with starches as proteins require an acidic medium while starches require an alkaline medium to digest. Eating them together slows down digestion and creates imbalance in our digestive system. Whenever possible, keep to eating only one type of protein at any one time for better digestion and assimilation.

**(4) Chew your foods thoroughly.** Chewing your food thoroughly breaks it down so that it is easier for your body to digest and assimilate the nutrients into your body.

**(5) Relax and stay happy when you are having your meal.** Emotions like sadness, worry, fear and anger can stall the digestion process.

It is that simple!:)

While it may seem difficult to be that disciplined, you can come up with lots of fun, interesting, tasty and nourishing combinations when you are committed to it.

For a sumptuous breakfast that will give your body an energetic boost at the start of a day, I usually eat fruits for breakfast. A big bowl of just 1 or 2 types of fruits correctly combined ensures that you feel full, happy and alert throughout the day.

Lunch is a good time to consume starch foods like rice, noodles, pasta or bread. I usually have a big bowl of starch foods with some salad and or vegetables.

If you really love proteins like meat and fish, not to worry. Just have them during dinner like me. I usually eat a big piece of my protein foods with slightly cook green leafy vegetable and salad in the evening for a fulfilling meal.

Give it a try! You just might solve all your digestive problems once and for all.

### DID YOU KNOW? What is in your POOP?

About 3/4 of your average turd is made of water. Of course, this value is highly variable. Water is absorbed out of fecal material as it passes through the intestine, so the longer a turd resides inside before emerging, the drier it will be.

Of the remaining portion of the turd, about 1/3 is composed of dead bacteria. These microcorps come from the intestinal garden of microorganisms that assist us in the digestion of our food.

Another 1/3 of the turd mass is made of stuff that we find indigestible. This indigestible material is called "fiber," and is useful in getting the turd to move along through the intestine.

The remaining portion of the turd is a mixture of fats such as cholesterol, inorganic salts like phosphates, live bacteria, dead cells and mucus from the lining of the intestine, and protein.

### JOKES OF THE DAY – Bowel Gotta Move

An Indian Chief named Bowel received a letter telling him that he would have to move from his home, so he went to town to the bureau of Indian affairs.

Once he was there, he mistakenly entered a doctor's office. When the doctor came out, he inquired as to what the problem might be. The Chief replied "Bowel no move".

The doctor said "no problem, just take these pills and come back in a week."

A week passed and Bowel returned. The doctor asked how things were, to which he replied, "Bowel still no move". The doctor gave him more pills and told him to return in a week. The week passed and once more Bowel was at the doctor's office again the doctor inquired as to how things were. Bowel replied "Bowel gotta move, tee-poe fulla shit!"

The printing of this flyer is sponsored by:



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