



HERBAL CLINIC

Managing SIBO: Approaches for Diet,
Lifestyle, and Supplements



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DISCLAIMER

This eBook provides educational strategies for consideration but has not been reviewed by Health Canada and is not intended for treating health conditions. Since everyone's needs and health conditions are unique, what works for one person may not be suitable for another. Please consult with a healthcare professional to tailor any recommendations to your specific situation.

WHAT IS SIBO?

SIBO, or Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth, occurs when there's an excessive buildup of bacteria in the small intestine. Normally, the small intestine has relatively few bacteria compared to the large intestine. However, when the balance is disrupted, these bacteria can overgrow and interfere with your digestion and nutrient absorption.

This imbalance can lead to uncomfortable symptoms like bloating, abdominal pain, excessive gas, and either diarrhea or constipation. It's often linked to issues like slow motility of the intestine, structural changes, or disruptions in the digestive process.

HOW CAN I ADDRESS SIBO?

To address SIBO effectively, we typically focus on a multi-faceted approach. This includes dietary adjustments to reduce fermentable foods that feed the bacteria, lifestyle changes to support overall gut health, and sometimes supplements or treatments to restore balance. Understanding and addressing these factors can help you feel better and improve your digestive health.

DIETARY APPROACHES

Diet is fundamental in managing SIBO, as it can significantly influence your symptoms and overall well-being. Depending on the severity of your condition, we might consider four different dietary approaches—Low FODMAP, Specific Carbohydrate Diet, Elemental Diet, and Bi-Phasic Diet—along with a list of foods that should be avoided to help support your healing process.

- Low FODMAP diet
- Specific carbohydrate diet
- Elemental diet
- Bi-phasic diet
- Foods to always remove



LOW FODMAP DIET

The Low FODMAP Diet helps manage SIBO by reducing foods high in fermentable carbohydrates that can aggravate symptoms. For this diet, you'll avoid foods that are rich in oligosaccharides (fructans, galactans), disaccharides (lactose), monosaccharides (fructose), and polyols (sorbitol, mannitol), which can feed bacteria in your gut. Just a heads-up: unripe bananas are low in FODMAPs, but this is only true before they ripen. As bananas turn ripe, their fructose content goes up.

1. Oligosaccharides (fructans and galactans)

Foods to Eat (Low in Oligosaccharides)	Foods to Avoid (High in Oligosaccharides)
Vegetables: Carrots, cucumbers, bell peppers, spinach, zucchini	Fructans: Onions, garlic, leeks, asparagus, artichokes, wheat-based products (bread, pasta, cereal)
Grains: Rice, oats, quinoa	Galactans: Beans (black beans, kidney beans, chickpeas), lentils, split peas
Fruits: Blueberries, strawberries, oranges, kiwi	



2. Disaccharides (lactose)

Foods to Eat (Low in Disaccharides)	Foods to Avoid (High in Disaccharides)
<p>Dairy Alternatives: Lactose-free milk, almond milk, coconut milk, lactose-free yogurt</p>	<p>Dairy Products: Regular milk, soft cheeses (cream cheese, ricotta), regular yogurt, ice cream</p>
<p>Cheeses: Hard cheeses (cheddar, Parmesan), which have lower lactose content</p>	
<p>Yogurt: Greek yogurt (often lower in lactose)</p>	

3. Monosaccharides (fructose)

Foods to Eat (Low in Monosaccharides)	Foods to Avoid (High in Monosaccharides)
<p>Vegetables: Bell peppers, carrots, cucumber, spinach</p>	<p>Fruits: Apples, pears, mangoes, cherries, watermelon</p>
<p>Fruits: Berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries), bananas (unripe), kiwi, oranges</p>	<p>Vegetables: Sweet corn, artichokes</p>
<p>Grains: Rice, oats, quinoa</p>	<p>Sweeteners: Honey, high-fructose corn syrup, agave nectar</p>



4. Polyols (sorbitol and mannitol)

Foods to Eat (Low in Polyols)	Foods to Avoid (High in Polyols)
Fruits: Oranges, strawberries, blueberries, bananas (unripe)	Fruits: Apples, pears, cherries, avocados
Vegetables: Bell peppers, carrots, cucumbers, spinach	Vegetables: Mushrooms, cauliflower
Sweeteners: Maple syrup, table sugar	Sweeteners: Sorbitol, mannitol (often found in sugar-free gum, candies, and processed foods)



LOW FODMAP DIET

Sample meal plan

Time	Foods
Breakfast	1 cup of Greek yogurt (lactose-free)
	1/2 cup of strawberries and 1/2 cup of blueberries mixed into the yogurt
	1/2 cup of oatmeal cooked with 1 cup of almond milk
	1 small unripe banana, sliced
Lunch	4 oz of grilled chicken breast
	Quinoa salad: 1 cup cooked quinoa, 1/2 cup diced bell peppers, 1/2 cup diced cucumbers, 1 cup fresh spinach, and a light lemon vinaigrette
	1 medium orange, sliced
Snack	1 small unripe banana or 1/2 cup of blueberries
Dinner	4 oz of baked salmon
	Side of roasted carrots (1 cup) and steamed zucchini (1 cup)
	1/2 cup cooked rice



SPECIFIC CARBOHYDRATE DIET

The Specific Carbohydrate Diet focuses on eliminating complex carbs and sugars that can be difficult to digest and may worsen SIBO symptoms. It's about choosing easily digestible, nutrient-dense foods and avoiding grains and certain sugars.

You can enjoy fresh fruits (except bananas), vegetables, nuts, and honey. These foods are less likely to ferment in your gut. Avoid bread, pasta, cereals, milk, and other dairy products, as these can disrupt your digestive balance.



Foods to Eat	Foods to Avoid
<p>Proteins: Chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, beef</p>	<p>Grains: Wheat-based products (bread, pasta, cereal), rice</p>
<p>Vegetables: Carrots, spinach, kale, squash, green beans</p>	<p>Dairy: Milk, soft cheeses, processed dairy products</p>
<p>Fruits: Apples, blueberries, strawberries</p>	<p>Legumes: Beans, lentils, chickpeas</p>
<p>Nuts & Seeds: Almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds</p>	<p>Sweeteners: Refined sugars, artificial sweeteners, high fructose corn syrup</p>
<p>Dairy (if tolerated): Homemade yogurt (fermented for 24 hours), hard cheeses (like Parmesan)</p>	<p>Processed Foods: Packaged snacks, foods with additives</p>
<p>Sweeteners: Honey, pure maple syrup</p>	
<p>Grains: Almond flour, coconut flour</p>	

Sample meal plan

Time	Foods
Breakfast	Egg and Spinach Scramble: 2 large eggs cooked with 1 cup of fresh spinach in 1 tablespoon of olive oil or ghee
	1 medium apple, sliced
	A small handful (about 1/4 cup) of walnuts
Lunch	Turkey and Vegetable Stir-Fry: 4 oz of ground turkey sautéed with 1 cup of sliced zucchini, 1/2 cup of grated carrots, and 1/2 cup of spinach, cooked in 1 tablespoon of olive oil and seasoned with herbs
	1/2 cup of blueberries
Snack	1 medium apple sliced and served with 2 tablespoons of almond butter
Dinner	Beef Stew: 4 oz of beef cubes slow-cooked with 1 cup of diced butternut squash and 1/2 cup of green beans in a broth made with olive oil and herbs



ELEMENTAL DIET

The Elemental Diet is a specialized, short-term liquid diet that's designed to give your gut a much-needed rest. It provides all your essential nutrients in a pre-digested form, which means everything is broken down into its most basic components like free-form amino acids, medium-chain triglycerides (fats), simple carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals. This makes it very easy for your body to absorb and leaves minimal residue for bacteria to ferment. By doing so, it can help reduce bacterial overgrowth and inflammation in your gut.

Typically, this diet is used for 2-3 weeks, especially in more severe cases, and should be done under medical supervision due to its restrictive nature and the significant changes it involves.

This diet primarily consists of specially formulated elemental shakes that you can purchase. These shakes contain all essential nutrients in an easily digestible form. All solid foods are restricted during this diet, so stick to the liquid formula provided.

Foods to Eat	Foods to Avoid
Formulas: Pre-packaged elemental diet shakes (like Vivonex or Elemental)	Solid Foods: All solid foods are restricted during the Elemental Diet phase
Fluids: Water, herbal teas, broths (if allowed)	

BI-PHASIC DIET

The Bi-Phasic Diet involves two phases: a more restrictive phase to minimize bacterial overgrowth followed by a reintroduction phase to gradually reintroduce foods.

Phase 1

In this first phase, we're focusing on giving your digestive system a break and reducing any inflammation or bacterial overgrowth. This means sticking to a diet that's gentle on your gut and avoids foods that are known to ferment and worsen SIBO symptoms. It's a bit restrictive, but it helps to calm things down and sets the stage for healing.

Phase 2

Once we've made some progress with Phase 1, we move into Phase 2. This is where we start reintroducing a wider range of foods to see how your body responds. The goal here is to slowly bring back different foods and find out what works well for you, while continuing to support your digestive health.



Phase 1

Foods to Eat	Foods to Avoid
Proteins: Lean meats (chicken, turkey, fish), eggs	High FODMAP Foods: Garlic, onions, broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, artichokes
Vegetables: Cooked non-starchy options like carrots, cucumbers, spinach, zucchini, bell peppers	Sugary Foods: Candies, sugary drinks, baked goods with added sugars
Fruits: Low-FODMAP choices such as blueberries, strawberries, and unripe bananas (keep fruit intake moderate)	Processed Foods: Pre-packaged meals, fast food, items with artificial additives or high fructose corn syrup
Grains: Plain rice, quinoa	
Fats: Olive oil, coconut oil	

BI-PHASIC DIET

Phase 1 sample meal plan

Time	Foods
Breakfast	Egg and Spinach Scramble: 2 large eggs cooked with 1 cup of fresh spinach in 1 tablespoon of olive oil or ghee
	1/2 cup of blueberries
Lunch	Grilled 4 oz of lean turkey breast, seasoned with herbs
	Cucumber and Carrot Salad: 1 cup of sliced cucumbers and 1/2 cup of grated carrots, dressed with 1 tablespoon of olive oil and a splash of lemon juice
	1/2 cup cooked quinoa
Snack	1 small unripe banana
Dinner	Baked Fish: 4 oz of white fish (like cod or tilapia), baked with a drizzle of olive oil and herbs
	1 cup of zucchini, steamed
	1/2 cup cooked plain rice



Phase 2

Foods to Eat	Foods to Avoid
<p>Proteins: Continue with lean meats, fish, and eggs. You can start experimenting with small amounts of legumes if tolerated.</p>	<p>High FODMAP Foods: Reintroduce cautiously and monitor symptoms. If you experience issues, consider avoiding specific foods or reducing quantities.</p>
<p>Vegetables: Begin reintroducing a wider variety, such as bell peppers and green beans, in small amounts to gauge your tolerance.</p>	<p>Sugary Foods: Maintain the same level of avoidance as in Phase 1 to support ongoing symptom management.</p>
<p>Fruits: Slowly add other fruits like apples and pears, paying attention to how your body reacts.</p>	<p>Processed Foods: Maintain the same level of avoidance as in Phase 1 to support ongoing symptom management.</p>
<p>Grains: You can reintroduce oats and rice gradually, observing for any adverse effects.</p>	
<p>Fats: Continue with olive oil, coconut oil, and consider adding avocados if well-tolerated.</p>	

BI-PHASIC DIET

Phase 2 sample meal plan

Time	Foods
Breakfast	Oatmeal: 1/2 cup of rolled oats cooked with 1/2 cup of coconut milk, topped with 1/4 cup of blueberries and a sprinkle of cinnamon
	2 large boiled eggs
Lunch	Grilled Fish Tacos: 4 oz of grilled white fish (such as tilapia or cod) wrapped in lettuce leaves with 1/4 cup of diced bell peppers, 1/2 cup of shredded carrots, and a dollop of homemade guacamole (1/4 avocado mashed with lime juice)
	1 medium apple, sliced
Snack	1/2 cup of plain yogurt with a drizzle of honey (1 teaspoon) if desired
Dinner	Herb-Roasted Chicken Thighs: 4 oz of chicken thighs seasoned with herbs (such as rosemary and thyme) and roasted in a drizzle of olive oil
	1 cup of green beans, steamed
	2 cup of cooked quinoa



FOODS TO ALWAYS REMOVE

Removing these foods from your diet can help manage symptoms of SIBO or other digestive issues by reducing the intake of high FODMAP substances, sugars, and additives that contribute to gut fermentation and discomfort.

Category	Foods
<p>High FODMAP Foods: High FODMAP foods are high in fermentable carbohydrates that can cause digestive discomfort.</p>	<p>Vegetables: Garlic, onions, asparagus, artichokes, Brussels sprouts</p>
	<p>Fruits: Apples, pears, mangoes, cherries, watermelon</p>
	<p>Grains: Wheat-based products (bread, pasta), rye, barley</p>
	<p>Legumes: Lentils, chickpeas, black beans, kidney beans</p>
<p>Sugary Foods: Sugary foods are high in sugars that can exacerbate digestive symptoms.</p>	<p>Candy: Gummies, chocolate bars, sweets with added sugars</p>
	<p>Beverages: Soda, sugary drinks, sweetened juices</p>
	<p>Baked Goods: Cakes, pastries, cookies with added sugars</p>
<p>Processed Foods: Processed foods often contain ingredients that can aggravate digestive problems.</p>	<p>Pre-packaged Meals: Frozen dinners, ready-to-eat meals with additives</p>
	<p>Fast Food: Burgers, fries, other restaurant foods with high sugar or fat content</p>
	<p>Sauces: Those containing high fructose corn syrup or other added sugars</p>



LIFESTYLE CHANGES

When addressing SIBO, lifestyle changes play a vital role alongside dietary adjustments. Staying well-hydrated, incorporating regular exercise, adopting mindful eating habits and managing stress effectively are essential for supporting your digestive health. These practices help improve gut motility, enhance digestion, and reduce stress, all of which are crucial for effectively managing SIBO and promoting overall healing. Embracing these changes will significantly contribute to your recovery and well-being.

Staying well-hydrated

Proper hydration is essential for digestive health as it helps maintain the balance of bodily fluids, supports nutrient absorption, and aids in the elimination of waste. For individuals with SIBO, staying well-hydrated can also help improve gut motility and prevent constipation, which is crucial for managing symptoms.

Tips

Drink Water Regularly:

Aim to drink at least 8 glasses (2 liters) of water a day. You might need more if you're active or live in a hot climate.

Incorporate Herbal Teas:

Herbal teas like ginger or peppermint can be soothing and beneficial for digestion. Just ensure they are free from high-FODMAP ingredients.

Avoid Sugary and Caffeinated Drinks:

Limit beverages like soda, sugary drinks, and excessive caffeine, as they can disrupt hydration and contribute to digestive issues.



Incorporating regular exercise

Regular physical activity supports healthy digestion by enhancing gut motility, reducing stress, and improving overall metabolic function. Exercise can help alleviate symptoms such as bloating and constipation, which are common in SIBO.

Tips

Choose Low-Impact Activities:

Activities like walking, swimming, or yoga are gentle on the body and can improve digestion without causing excessive strain.

Be Consistent:

Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. Consistency is key to seeing benefits.

Listen to Your Body:

Start with lighter exercises and gradually increase intensity based on how your body responds. Avoid vigorous workouts if they exacerbate symptoms.



Adopting mindful eating habits

Mindful eating involves paying full attention to the eating experience, which helps improve digestion and prevent overeating. For individuals with SIBO, eating slowly and being aware of food choices can reduce symptoms and support overall gut health.

Tips

Eat Slowly and Chew Thoroughly:

Take your time with each bite and chew food thoroughly to aid digestion and nutrient absorption.

Avoid Distractions:

Eat in a calm environment without distractions like TV or smartphones, which can help you focus on your food and recognize hunger and fullness cues.

Listen to Your Body:

Pay attention to how different foods affect you and adjust your diet accordingly. Avoid eating large meals, which can overwhelm your digestive system and lead to discomfort.



Managing stress effectively

Managing stress is a crucial component of managing SIBO because stress can significantly impact digestive health. High levels of stress can exacerbate symptoms like bloating and discomfort by affecting gut motility and increasing inflammation. By managing stress effectively, you support your body's ability to heal and maintain balance.

Tips

Practice Relaxation Techniques:

Incorporate relaxation practices such as deep breathing exercises, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation into your daily routine. These techniques help calm the nervous system and reduce the impact of stress on your digestive health.

Engage in Activities You Enjoy:

Make time for hobbies and activities that bring you joy and relaxation, whether it's reading, gardening, or listening to music. These activities can provide a mental break and help reduce overall stress levels.

Establish a Routine:

Create a consistent daily routine that includes regular sleep patterns, balanced meals, and time for self-care. A structured routine can help manage stress and improve your overall well-being.

Seek Support:

Don't hesitate to reach out to friends, family, or a professional therapist if you need support managing stress. Talking about your concerns and challenges can provide relief and help you feel more in control.



SUPPORTIVE SUPPLEMENTS

Supplements can be a great addition to your plan for managing SIBO. They help by addressing specific issues in your gut and supporting your overall digestive health. Think of them as tools that can help reduce bacterial overgrowth, improve digestion, and get your gut back in balance.

Probiotics

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that help maintain a healthy balance in your gut microbiome. They can be particularly helpful for SIBO by supporting the growth of good bacteria and potentially reducing symptoms. Probiotics work by outcompeting harmful bacteria and restoring balance in your digestive system. However, it's important to remember that while probiotics can be beneficial, they might sometimes make SIBO worse for some people. It's best to use them based on your healthcare provider's advice to ensure they're the right choice for you.



What to look for:

Strain:

Look for probiotics that contain strains known to benefit digestive health, such as *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, and *Bifidobacterium bifidum*. Your healthcare provider can suggest specific strains based on your needs.

Incorporate Herbal Teas:

Herbal teas like ginger or peppermint can be soothing and beneficial for digestion. Just ensure they are free from high FODMAP ingredients.

Avoid Sugary and Caffeinated Drinks:

Limit beverages like soda, sugary drinks, and excessive caffeine, as they can disrupt hydration and contribute to digestive issues.



Digestive enzymes

Digestive enzymes help break down food more effectively in your digestive tract. For individuals with SIBO, they can ease symptoms such as bloating and gas by helping to digest food more completely and reduce the burden on your gut.

What to look for:

Broad Spectrum:

Choose a digestive enzyme supplement that includes a mix of enzymes like amylase (for carbohydrates), protease (for proteins), and lipase (for fats). This ensures that you're getting comprehensive support for digesting different types of foods.

Quality Ingredients:

Look for supplements with high-quality, well-researched enzyme sources. Avoid products with unnecessary fillers or artificial ingredients.

Dosage:

Follow the recommended dosage on the label or as advised by your healthcare provider. This is typically taken with meals to aid in digestion.



Herbal antibiotics

Herbal antibiotics, such as oregano oil and berberine, have natural antimicrobial properties that can help manage bacterial overgrowth in SIBO. They work by targeting harmful bacteria in the gut while helping to support a balanced microbiome.

Suggestions

Myrrh:

Myrrh acts like a soothing balm for your gut. It has antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties that help manage SIBO by targeting harmful bacteria and supporting your gut's natural protective barriers.

Barberry:

Berberine-containing herbs like barberry have strong antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties. It can help manage bacterial overgrowth and support gut health.

Thyme:

Thyme contains thymol, a compound with strong antimicrobial properties. It can help inhibit bacterial growth and support gut health.

At [Herbal Clinic](#), we have a handy [SIBO Tincture](#) that blends myrrh goldenseal and thyme, bringing together three great herbs to help manage SIBO. This all-in-one tincture makes it easy to get the benefits of these herbs in your daily routine, supporting gut health and providing comprehensive support.



MONITORING SIBO SYMPTOMS

Managing SIBO effectively requires a personalized approach, as each individual's response to dietary and lifestyle changes can vary. Regularly monitoring your symptoms and noting any improvements are essential for understanding how well your current plan is working. It's important to work closely with your healthcare provider to tailor your diet to meet your specific needs.

Tips

Maintain a Symptom Journal:

Keep track of your daily symptoms, their severity, and the foods you eat. This will help identify what's working and what might need adjustment.

Observe Dietary Changes:

Record any new foods you introduce or remove from your diet and how these changes affect your symptoms. This information will be invaluable for refining your approach.

Schedule Regular Check-ins:

Have consistent follow-up appointments with your healthcare provider to review your progress and make any necessary adjustments to your plan based on your observations.

Stay Patient and Open-Minded:

Finding the right balance may take some time. Be patient and willing to make changes as needed, knowing that each adjustment brings you closer to relief.



MONITORING SIBO SYMPTOMS

By actively monitoring your symptoms and working together with your healthcare provider, you'll be able to fine-tune your SIBO management plan and support your path to feeling better and improving your overall health.