



LOW FODMAP Challenge

Appendix A

Non-FODMAP Triggers of Digestive Symptoms

- Living with IBS or sensitive gut often requires managing more than just food triggers.
- While the low FODMAP diet is a well-known method to alleviate symptoms, it's important to recognize that non-dietary factors also play a significant role in digestive symptoms.
- Certain foods that seem “safe” on the low FODMAP list can still lead to discomfort, and some digestive symptoms may not be entirely diet-related.

1 Stress and Emotional Wellbeing

The connection between the gut and brain, known as the gut-brain axis, means that stress can directly affect digestion. Psychological stress may alter gut motility, increase sensitivity, and disrupt the microbiome.

What can help:

What helps: Try deep breathing, stretching, walking, or calming activities like journaling, listening to music, or talking to someone you trust.

2 Sleep Quality

Poor sleep can worsen gastrointestinal issues by increasing pain perception and disrupting gut function.

What can help:

Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Before bed, do something calming like reading, gentle stretching, or listening to soft music.

3 Medications and Supplements

Certain medications, such as NSAIDs, antibiotics, laxatives, and iron supplements, can irritate the gut. Additionally, some supplements or chewable products contain sugar alcohols (e.g., sorbitol, mannitol), which are high-FODMAP.

What can help:

If you're taking any medications or supplements, talk to your dietitian, pharmacist, or doctor to see if they could be affecting your symptoms.

4 Hormonal Fluctuations

Hormonal changes, especially during the menstrual cycle, can affect gut sensitivity and bowel function.

What can help:

Keep track of symptoms around your cycle. Adjust rest, self-care, or meals as needed.

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5 Eating Behaviours and Meal Patterns

The way you eat can be just as important as what you eat. Eating quickly, skipping meals, or swallowing excess air can trigger symptoms, even with low FODMAP foods.

What can help:

Eat slowly, chew your food well, and try smaller meals spaced out during the day. Avoid eating while rushed or distracted.

6 Carbonated Drinks

Carbonated beverages like soda and sparkling water may aggravate symptoms in some people. The bubbles can cause bloating and discomfort due to stomach and intestinal distension.

What can help:

Opt for still water, low FODMAP herbal teas, or non-carbonated beverages instead.

7 Spicy Foods

Spicy foods can irritate the gut and worsen digestive symptoms, even when they are low in FODMAPs.

What can help:

Experiment with milder spices and avoid excessively hot foods to minimize discomfort.

8 Coffee

Although coffee itself is low in FODMAPs, it can stimulate the gastrointestinal tract, leading to cramping, diarrhea, or urgency in some people.

What can help:

If coffee appears to worsen your symptoms, consider reducing your intake or trying alternatives, such as low FODMAP herbal teas or decaffeinated coffee, to determine if they alleviate discomfort.

9 Alcohol

Alcohol, especially in excess, can irritate the gut and affect its motility, leading to symptoms like diarrhea, abdominal pain, and bloating.

What can help:

Limit alcohol intake and observe how it affects your symptoms.

10 Smoking

Smoking can irritate the gut and is associated with worsened digestive symptoms, including abdominal pain and bloating.

What can help:

Cutting back smoking can improve overall gut health and reduce digestive symptoms.

If you're not seeing significant improvements with the low FODMAP diet, working with a FODMAP-trained dietitian can help uncover other dietary or non-dietary triggers.