

Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations for SIBO

SIBO, or small intestinal bacterial overgrowth, is a condition where an excessive number of microorganisms have migrated from the large intestine to the small intestine or have been ingested from food where they take up residence and reproduce where they should not be. This causes an imbalance in the digestion process. It may have autoimmune causes, and it may also be triggered by a single food poisoning event. It can be uncomfortable and disruptive to your clients' everyday lives. Poor diet, low stomach acid, antibiotic overuse, and chronic stress can contribute to SIBO, which in turn can be the source for other gut microbial imbalances, low immune function, as well as food and supplement intolerances.

SIBO symptoms may include:

- Upper and lower abdominal distention
- Burping and flatulence
- Food intolerances
- Slow and poor digestion
- Diarrhea and/or constipation
- Low energy
- Poor sleep quality
- Intolerance to fermented foods and probiotics

The guidelines listed in this handout describe general recommendations that a Functional Medicine practitioner may provide for a client's SIBO treatment. This information is provided so that you are more familiar with what your health coaching clients may experience and better able to understand the goals of the practitioner.

REDUCE OR AVOID

- **Processed foods, industrial seed oils, sugar, and refined flour** may have a negative impact on gut health. They unbalance the bacteria living in our gut and can cause inflammation, intestinal permeability, and leptin resistance. All of these may make it difficult for a person to gauge whether or not they have had enough to eat, possibly leading to overeating.
- **Acellular carbohydrates, gluten, and grains:** Many people with digestive problems are intolerant of gluten, one of the proteins found in wheat, and find relief from a gluten-free diet. Other grains—even those that are gluten-free—can also cause digestive upset in some people, so the practitioner may recommend avoiding them in addition to gluten.
- **Insoluble fiber** can be irritating and can increase SIBO symptoms in some people. Examples of insoluble fiber foods are:
 - Greens (spinach, lettuce, kale, mesclun, collards, arugula, watercress, etc.)
 - Whole peas, snow peas, snap peas, and pea pods
 - Green beans
 - Kernel corn
 - Bell peppers
 - Eggplant
 - Celery
 - Onions, shallots, leeks, and scallions
 - Garlic
 - Broccoli
 - Cauliflower

Another step that a practitioner may recommend before eliminating insoluble fiber is to peel, mince, blend, and ferment the vegetables to break down the insoluble fiber and make them easier to digest. Other ideas that might improve tolerability of insoluble fiber include a combination of cooking, discarding the water, and blending to decrease irritation to the gut lining.

- **Alcohol:** Excessive alcohol consumption creates a pro-inflammatory environment in the gut and has been shown to promote a leaky gut lining. Practitioners will likely recommend that alcohol is limited to four to six drinks per week or eliminated completely until the gut is healed.
- **Medications:** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, aspirin, antibiotics, and acid-suppressing drugs have an adverse effect on the gut over the long term. While these drugs are sometimes necessary (and even lifesaving), their use should be

minimized when possible. Remember that only medical doctors can make any changes to medication regimens.

INCREASE

- **Bone broth:** It is rich in nutrients that have a soothing and healing effect on the gut. Bone broth can be made at home by simmering bones, ideally from pasture-raised animals such as cows or chickens, in water with any tolerated vegetables (such as carrots, celery, onions, and garlic) for 24-plus hours or for about two hours in an electric pressure cooker such as an Instant Pot. Broth can be used to make soups, stews, or sauces, or even sipped like tea. Another option is to purchase pre-made bone broth made from grass-fed animals such as the Kettle & Fire brand. Aim for ½ to 1 cup of bone broth per day.
- **Fermented foods or probiotics if tolerated:** Many clients with SIBO are not able to tolerate fermented foods and most probiotics. In cases where fermented foods trigger digestive symptoms, they should be eliminated and reintroduced in minimal amounts at a later stage during or after the SIBO treatment protocol, with the guidance of the practitioner.

Note: The fermentation process makes foods more digestible and produces healthy bacteria that are beneficial to the gut. Fermented foods include sauerkraut (and any other fermented vegetables), beet kvass, well-fermented kombucha, yogurt, kefir (water or dairy), kimchi, and more. When tolerated, aim for 1 to 2 tablespoons at each meal, plus other fermented foods like kefir or yogurt throughout the day. Soil-based probiotics and the new Seed symbiotic has been better tolerated than regular probiotics for those with SIBO. Certain probiotics such as Ideal Bowel Support with *Lactobacillus plantarum* are known to support those with methane-based SIBO.

- **Soluble fiber as tolerated:** In general, soluble fiber is soothing to the gut. Examples are:
 - Carrots
 - Winter squash and summer squash (especially peeled)
 - Starchy tubers (yams, sweet potatoes, white potatoes)
 - Turnips
 - Rutabagas
 - Parsnips
 - Beets
 - Plantains
 - Taro
 - Yuca

People diagnosed with SIBO may react to the FODMAPs (fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, and polyols) of some soluble fiber foods (see below for more on FODMAPs). In this case, the practitioner may provide specific guidance on types and amounts of soluble fiber for the client to experiment with.

FODMAPs: FODMAP foods contain certain types of carbohydrates that are poorly absorbed by some people and might wreak havoc in the small intestine, increasing SIBO symptoms in some clients. Some practitioners will guide clients who are FODMAP intolerant to a lower-FODMAP diet for a short time to avoid uncomfortable symptoms so that clients are better able to handle the antimicrobial protocol. FODMAP foods are important for strengthening the microbiome, preventing SIBO and other microbial imbalances and diseases. It is important to slowly reintroduce FODMAPs as soon as possible during or after the antimicrobial protocol. Examples of high-FODMAP foods are:

- Onions
- Garlic
- Cauliflower
- Artichokes
- Asparagus
- Legumes
- Agave nectar
- Milk
- Apples
- Figs

Monash University in Melbourne, Australia has resources and food lists for those wanting to learn more about FODMAPs as a good resource. Chris also provided a resource list in your ADAPT Health Coach Training material.

LIFESTYLE

Since stress and lack of sleep can also contribute to SIBO, daily meditation, contact with nature, deep breathing, yoga, and getting seven to eight hours of sleep each night are important for regenerating and rebalancing the gut.

Antimicrobial Protocol Example

A practitioner will typically recommend an individualized SIBO antimicrobial treatment protocol. A health coach working collaboratively with the practitioner may be asked to assist the client in implementing it. As an example, Chris Kresser’s ADAPT system antimicrobial protocol for SIBO will be tailored according to the client’s test results, whether they are hydrogen or methane dominant and based on the severity of their symptoms. It may or may not include conventional antibiotics. The practitioner will give important instructions on when to begin each supplement and how to reach full dosages. In general, a SIBO antimicrobial protocol will be conducted with a schedule similar to the following:

Sample Day	
On rising	Probiotic Biofilm disruptor
Breakfast	Digestive support
Lunch	Digestive support Coconut-based antimicrobial Herbal antimicrobial
Late afternoon (at least one hour before dinner)	Biofilm disruptor
Dinner	Digestive support Coconut-based antimicrobial Herbal antimicrobial Prebiotic
Before bed	Probiotic

Possible Yellow or Red Flags to Consider with Clients with SIBO:

- Clients may need to be referred to a practitioner if they report unresolved symptoms listed on page one.
- Long-term use of a low-FODMAP diet may lead to significant nutritional deficiencies.
- A client reporting intolerance of a SIBO antimicrobial protocol may need to be referred back to the practitioner.
- Long-term restrictive eating such as low FODMAPs may indicate an eating disorder.
- Proper hydration is key for the success of a SIBO antimicrobial protocol. Clients with low awareness of hydration may have increased discomfort during the protocol. A health coach may assist clients in keeping a fluid intake log, if needed, to avoid symptoms and to support detoxification.