



Katrina Ridout

— NUTRITION —



PARENTHOOD WITH IBS

A GUIDE TO A HEALTHY PREGNANCY AND BEYOND



WELCOME

Welcome to the information booklet for individuals with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) who are planning for pregnancy. This guide provides essential information on how to manage IBS symptoms and promote a healthy pregnancy while living with this gastrointestinal condition.

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Understanding IBS and Its Impact on Pregnancy

What is IBS?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a chronic disorder of the digestive system. It affects the large intestine, also known as the colon, and is characterised by a group of symptoms that can vary in intensity and duration. IBS is a chronic gastrointestinal disorder characterised by various symptoms, including abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhoea, and constipation. If you have IBS and are planning to become pregnant, it's important to understand how your condition may affect your pregnancy and vice versa.

Causes of IBS

The exact cause of IBS remains unknown, but several factors can contribute to its development:

- **Abnormal gut motility:** People with IBS may experience irregular contractions of the colon, causing diarrhoea or constipation.
- **Sensitivity to food:** Some individuals are sensitive to certain foods, which can trigger IBS symptoms.
- **Inflammation:** Low-grade inflammation in the gut may play a role in IBS.
- **Stress and psychological factors:** Emotional stress and anxiety can exacerbate IBS symptoms in some people.





Common Symptoms

IBS symptoms can vary from person to person, but the most common ones include:

- Abdominal pain and discomfort
- Bloating
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Altered stool consistency
- Urgency to have a bowel movement
- Gas and flatulence
- Mucus in the stool

Diagnosing IBS

Diagnosing IBS typically involves a process of exclusion, as there is no specific test for the condition. To rule out other potential gastrointestinal issues, healthcare providers may perform various tests, such as blood tests, stool samples, endoscopy, and colonoscopy. A diagnosis of IBS is made when no other underlying cause can be found.

Preparing for Pregnancy

Before embarking on your pregnancy journey, consider the following steps:

Consult your healthcare provider

Discuss your plans for pregnancy with a healthcare professional who is knowledgeable about IBS. They can provide personalised guidance and address any concerns.

Medication review

Review your current IBS medications with your healthcare provider to ensure they are safe for pregnancy. Some may need to be adjusted or replaced during pregnancy.

Folic acid

Begin taking a prenatal vitamin containing folic acid before pregnancy, as it is essential for foetal development.



Managing IBS Symptoms During Pregnancy

Pregnancy can be a time of significant change, and for those with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), these changes can affect digestive health. While some expectant mothers experience relief from their IBS symptoms during pregnancy, others may encounter occasional exacerbations. Here are essential strategies to help manage IBS during pregnancy:

Dietary Considerations:

Monitor your diet:

Keeping a detailed food diary can help you identify trigger foods that may worsen your IBS symptoms. This record will assist you in making necessary dietary adjustments to alleviate discomfort.

Consult a dietitian:

Consider consulting a registered dietitian specialising in gastrointestinal health. They can provide tailored guidance on managing IBS through nutrition, helping you create a personalised meal plan that suits your dietary needs during pregnancy.

Maintain balanced meals:

Aim for a well-balanced diet that includes a variety of nutrients. Adequate fibre and hydration are essential to support digestive health. High-fibre foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can help regulate bowel movements.

Medications and IBS during Pregnancy

Discuss any medication use with your healthcare provider, as some IBS medications may need to be adjusted or discontinued during pregnancy. It is crucial to prioritise the health and safety of both you and your developing baby.





When to Seek Medical Attention

While managing IBS during pregnancy is essential, it's equally crucial to be vigilant and aware of specific red flags that may require immediate medical attention. If you experience any of the following symptoms, it is highly advisable to consult a healthcare provider promptly:

Unexplained weight loss

Unexpected weight loss can signal underlying health issues and nutritional deficiencies.

Bloody stools

The presence of blood in your stool, regardless of colour, should never be ignored, as it may indicate severe gastrointestinal issues.

New or severe symptoms after the age of 50

If you develop new or severe IBS symptoms while being over 50, seek immediate medical evaluation.

Family history of colorectal cancer or inflammatory bowel disease

If you have a family history of these conditions and experience concerning symptoms, consult your healthcare provider for appropriate screening and care. Early detection is essential for a safe and healthy pregnancy.

Emotional and Psychological Support

Prioritise emotional well-being: The emotional well-being of expectant mothers is of paramount importance. Pregnancy itself can be a time of heightened stress and anxiety, and the presence of IBS symptoms may add to these feelings. Seek emotional and psychological support as needed.

Therapy or support groups: Consider engaging in therapy or joining support groups for pregnant individuals with IBS. These outlets can provide a safe space to express your concerns, share experiences, and receive guidance on managing the emotional impact of IBS during pregnancy.

Relaxation techniques: Explore relaxation techniques such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness, or yoga. These practices can help you reduce stress, manage anxiety, and enhance overall emotional well-being, contributing to a healthier pregnancy.





Seeking Medical Guidance

Regular communication

Maintain regular and open communication with your healthcare provider throughout your pregnancy. Report any changes in your IBS symptoms or concerns you may have, even if they seem minor. Your healthcare provider can help you adjust your management plan as needed to ensure a healthy pregnancy.

Individualised care

Your healthcare provider can provide individualised care and guidance based on your unique needs and circumstances. Be proactive in seeking their support and expertise, as they are your trusted ally in managing IBS during pregnancy.



Katridout Support

Kat Ridout understands the profound uniqueness of each individual's body, influenced by diverse factors such as diets, medical histories, genetics, lifestyles, and personal preferences. It is this recognition of individuality that forms the foundation of her approach. Kat's commitment to tailoring nutrition advice to meet your specific needs sets her apart as a dedicated expert in the field of fertility, pregnancy, and early life nutrition.

With more than fifteen years of experience in private practice and high-level research, Kat possesses specialised knowledge to help women and couples achieve successful conception and minimise the risk of miscarriage. Her expertise extends to managing a wide range of health conditions, including but not limited to PCOS, endometriosis, diabetes, IBD, disordered eating, autoimmune conditions, and other rare genetic conditions. She is well-versed in addressing factors such as egg and sperm quality and quantity, thin uterine lining, and recurrent miscarriages.

Kat Ridout's unwavering commitment to individualised care and her wealth of experience make her a valuable resource for those seeking to enhance their fertility and increase their chances of achieving a successful pregnancy.



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