

Is SIBO the cause of your gas, bloating and digestive issues?

BY BIJANA KADAKIA, ND

Carrying on with our clinic's recent focus on the health or disease inducing effects of our microbial populations, this article will focus on Small Intestine Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO), which is just what it sounds like, an overgrowth of bacteria in the small intestine. But wait, you know that bacteria are supposed to live in our digestive tract, right? Well, SIBO is a condition where the wrong bacteria, in the wrong amount are in the wrong place. This results in problems like gas, abdominal cramping, diarrhea, constipation, heartburn, malabsorption, inflammation and food allergies and sensitivities including lactose intolerance and celiac disease. There is even an association with the serious inflammatory bowel conditions ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.

SIBO has been found in up to 84% of cases of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Based on my clinical experience, I suspect the other 16% may be related to food allergies. And like all digestive disorders, the effects are not limited to the digestive tract. Our digestion and digestive tract is central to the health of our entire body:

- Proper digestion and absorption are essential for all body processes that require vitamins, minerals and macronutrients (which is all of them!);



- A large portion of the body's immune system is centered around the gastrointestinal (GI) tract or gut with influences on our ability to fight infection, autoimmune disease and allergies; and

- The GI tract has also been called "the second brain" as it is vital in the production of neurotransmitters and strongly influences the brain and nervous system.

So the effects of SIBO are not limited to digestive symptoms. In fact, SIBO has been associated with autoimmune conditions like rosacea, rheumatoid arthritis and Hashimoto's thyroiditis; with chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia; and various other conditions including interstitial cystitis, chronic prostatitis, restless leg syndrome, liver disease, depression and even autism.

It's incredible to think that an infection in the digestive tract can be implicated in so many conditions, but it is a testament to the importance of healthy diet and digestion.

At our clinic, we address SIBO from all angles - prevention, testing and treatment.

Some risk factors for SIBO are in your history - heavy use of antibiotics or

episodes of food poisoning - and cannot be modified. Other risk factors can be changed. Long term use of proton pump inhibitors (like Prilosec or Prevacid) or opiate pain relievers heavily influences the digestive tract and can increase susceptibility. Naturopathic medicine and acupuncture have ways to treat heartburn and chronic pain that do not have the same effect on the digestive tract or perpetuate SIBO.

If the above list sounds like you, don't believe that gas and frequent diarrhea or infrequent bowel movements are just "normal for you" as so many of my patients tell me. Come in for an evaluation and we will consider SIBO testing. Should you be positive for SIBO, we have many tools to provide you with an individualized treatment plan to improve your digestion and put you on a path to improving your overall health.



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