

# Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO)

## What is SIBO?

**Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO)** refers to an overabundance of bacteria in the small intestine. This often includes certain types of bacteria not normally found in this area of the digestive tract.

An overgrowth of bacteria can be the result of certain medical conditions, structural problems in or around the small intestine (ex: scarring or diverticulosis), or complications from abdominal surgery, such as gastric bypass to treat obesity or gastrectomy.



## Signs and Symptoms

SIBO can cause a range of symptoms including loss of appetite, abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea, malabsorption, malnutrition, and unintentional weight loss. Individuals with severe abdominal pain, persistent diarrhea, or rapid weight loss should seek immediate medical attention.

Suspected presence of SIBO is most easily supported through breath testing for a rise in methane or hydrogen production following consumption of a glucose drink. However, fecal tests and fluid samples taken directly from the small intestine are the most precise methods available for determining the presence of SIBO and type(s) of bacteria involved.

## SIBO has been linked to:

- Obesity
- Older age; Reduced acid production
- IBD, Crohn’s Disease, Ulcerative Colitis
- Bowel surgery
- Cirrhosis, Chronic Pancreatitis
- Type II Diabetes Mellitus
- Metabolic syndrome



## How is SIBO treated?

Depending on the underlying cause of SIBO, your doctor may prescribe you antibiotics to help reduce the number of bacteria in your small intestine. You may also be given medications to assist in keeping your bowel movements regular, so that food is not sitting in one part of your digestive tract for too long.

During treatment by your doctor, your dietitian can help you address any nutritional issues or eating difficulties you may have. This may require small diet changes, such as avoiding certain foods or eating smaller, more frequent meals to help minimize symptoms. Your dietitian may also recommend that you take a daily supplement if a vitamin and/or mineral deficiency is identified.

Following antibiotics, your dietitian may recommend supplementing with daily probiotics to help further reduce unwanted bacteria in the small intestine and ensure that the most beneficial types of bacteria are growing where they should be.

## Keys to management of SIBO:

- Treatment of underlying disease or condition
- Address any macro- and/or micro-nutrient deficiencies
  - Fat malabsorption common
  - Carbohydrate and Protein malabsorption possible
  - Focus on vitamin B12 and fat-soluble vitamins: A, D, and E
- Ensure proper small bowel motility
- Consider probiotic supplementation to support overall gut health
- Diet changes: Low-FODMAP, smaller meals, etc.
- Weight loss

