

**HELLO!** lifestyle

**WELLBEING**

# GUT FEELING

*Irritable bowel syndrome affects up to one fifth of UK adults, and can lead to hospitalisation. If you've had a bellyful of the pain caused by this all-too-common problem, a new study could offer hope*

*Bouts of stomach* cramps, bloating, diarrhoea and constipation are the classic symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and, while their severity can vary, in some cases they are so extreme that sufferers seek hospital treatment. Women seem to be worse affected: of more than 5,000 hospital admissions in England last year due to IBS, the largest group was women aged between 40 and 44.

"Figures show that hospitals are seeing a far bigger number of females come through their doors for this condition, with women accounting for 70 per cent of admissions for IBS in 2011," says Tim Straughan, chief executive of the Health and Social Care Information Centre.

Women are twice as likely as men to suffer from IBS, often experiencing symptoms in their late teens or early twenties. The severity of these can vary, but when a nationwide study quizzed 2,000 IBS sufferers, two-thirds admitted they had taken time off work because their condition was so severe, a quarter said it had an impact on their social life and stopped them going out, and nearly a third that it left them depressed.

Many people are too embarrassed to visit their GP and, of those who do, more than 90 per cent will still be experiencing

symptoms five years after their diagnosis.

## *Stronger stomachs*

There may be some hope for sufferers, however, according to findings from new research – the largest independent IBS probiotic study to date – carried out at the gastroenterology department at King's College Hospital in London.

Headed by leading gastroenterologist Professor Ingvar Bjarnason, the research team studied 186 IBS patients who had failed first- and second-line treatments and whose symptoms were sufficiently bad for GPs to refer them to the hospital. They found that patients who were given a dietary supplement of a new probiotic drink experienced a "significant reduction" in the severity of their symptoms.

The special drink contains four strains of live, activated "friendly" bacteria: *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, *L. acidophilus*, *L. plantarum* and *Enterococcus faecium*. These are among the hundreds of species of "friendly" microbes that coexist in harmony in the gut, and help support and maintain a healthy digestive system.

## *Friendly microbes*

The results of the study were very promising,

says Professor Bjarnason: "[Probiotics] did not work for everyone, but around 60 per cent of those on the active product showed an improvement."

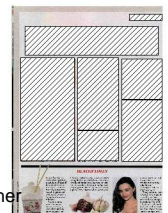
We usually get probiotics from our diet but over the past few decades the standard Western diet has changed to such an extent that it can be probiotic deficient.

Symprove, the product used in the study, is a water-based drink rather than dairy-based and its friendly bacteria get to work and start multiplying in the gut within 20 minutes of being swallowed.

It also passes straight through the stomach without triggering digestion – which can destroy "good" bacteria before they have a chance to start working – so the probiotics can successfully reach the gut.

If you want to give Symprove a try, do not expect to see improvements overnight. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence recommends that you use probiotics for at least four weeks, while monitoring the effect. ☐

• For more information about Symprove, visit [symprove.com](http://symprove.com).



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