PrecisionBiotics®

Science in every strain

Probiotics and Irritable Bowel Syndrome:

International Guidelines & Expert Opinions

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a relapsing long-term condition that affects the digestive system[1]. Affecting 1 in 10 people globally, IBS is the most common functional gastrointestinal disorder (FGID)[2]. Common symptoms of IBS include[3,4]:

Abdominal pain

Diarrhoea

Constipation

Bloating

Using the established criteria outlined by the Rome Foundation, IBS is defined by[1,2,4]:

Recurrent abdominal pain occurring at least one day/week in the last three months on average, associated with **two or more** of the following criteria:

1. Related to defecation
2. Associated with a change in frequency of stool
3. Associated with a change in form (appearance) of stool

* For the last three months with symptom onset at least six months prior to diagnosis

IBS is a lifelong chronic condition[5], however, it is possible to successfully manage symptoms. Firstline treatment involves dietary and lifestyle approaches[6]. As the gut microbiota has been implicated in the pathophysiology of IBS[7,8], probiotics are increasingly considered as a potential therapeutic tool in clinical management of symptoms.

This document summarises international and national guidelines on the use of probiotics for the management of IBS.

International Guidelines

The 2024 **World Gastroenterology Organisation** (WGO) guidelines on probiotics and prebiotics highlighted improvements in global assessment of IBS symptoms with *Bifidobacterium longum* **35624™**, and stressed the importance of evidence from human studies when recommending any probiotic in clinical practice.[5]

The European Society of Primary Care Gastroenterology Guidelines (2018) on probiotics in the management of lower gastrointestinal symptoms concluded that specific probiotics can relieve lower GI symptoms in IBS[9]. The ESPCG guidelines noted that, in particular, *Bifidobacterium longum* **35624™** may help to:

- Relieve overall symptom burden in some patients with IBS (Grade of evidence: High; Agreement: 100%)
- Relieve overall symptom burden in some patients with IBS-D (Grade of evidence: Moderate; Agreement: 100%)
- Reduce abdominal pain in some patients with IBS Grade of evidence: High; Agreement: 100%)
- Reduce bloating/distension in some patients with IBS (Grade of evidence: Moderate; Agreement: 80%)
- Improve frequency and/or consistency of bowel movements in some IBS patients (Grade of evidence: Moderate; Agreement: 100%)

The guidelines also noted that probiotics have a favourable safety profile in patients with a large range of lower GI symptoms typically managed in primary care or general practice (Grade of evidence: High; Agreement: 100%)

Meaning for physicians regarding grade of evidence:

HIGH – Probiotics with supportive evidence for benefit should be tried;

MODERATE – Probiotics with supportive evidence for benefit could be tried.

National Guidelines

In the UK, guidance is primarily influenced by guidelines from the **National Institute for Health and Excellence** (NICE) the **British Dietetic Association** (BDA), and the **British Society of Gastroenterology** (BSG).

- Guidelines from NICE 2017[6] and the BDA[10] recommend that people with IBS choosing to take probiotics should be advised to try them for a minimum of 4 weeks, at the dosage recommended by the manufacturer. The effects should be monitored during this time.
- More recent (2021) guidelines from the BSG recommend extending this period to 12 weeks in order to evaluate their effect[11].

"Probiotics, as a group, may be an effective treatment for global symptoms and abdominal pain in IBS..."

British Society of Gastroenterology guidelines (2021)[14]

Canada[15]
'We suggest offering IBS patients probiotics to improve IBS symptoms.'

USA[16]
'Particular probiotics...have beneficial effects on global IBS symptoms and abdominal pain'.

'We suggest probiotics...to improve global symptoms, as well as bloating and flatulence in IBS patients.'

Poland[17]
'We suggest using certain strains... tested for their efficacy in IBS...to reduce overall symptoms of IBS as well as bloating and diarrhoea'.

The **35624™** strain has 'a likely beneficial effect on IBS symptoms'.

Romania[12]
'In patients with IBS, we recommend the use of probiotics as an alternative therapy in trials of limited duration.'

France[13]
Some strains of bacteria (e.g. the **35624™** strain) have shown moderate efficacy in studies.

Korea[18]
'Probiotics may be considered to relieve global symptoms, bloating, and flatulence in IBS patients.'

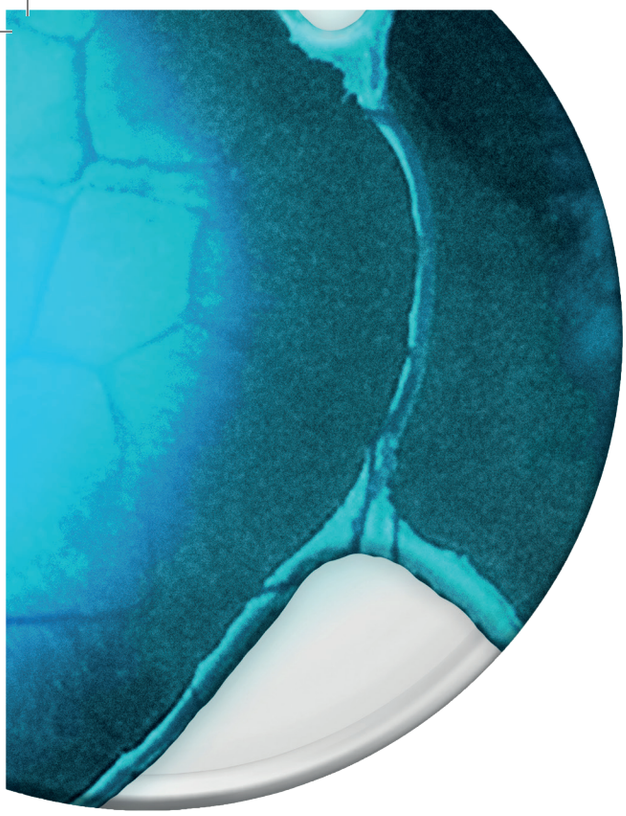
'Probiotics are considered beneficial for IBS, as they are inexpensive and safe'.

Japan[14]
'Probiotics are effective in treating IBS. Probiotics are recommended for IBS.' *Strong recommendation, evidence level A, 100% agreed.*

Conclusion

IBS is a chronic condition affecting a large number of people globally. It is well documented in international and national clinical guidelines, that certain probiotics are recommended to help manage the symptoms of IBS. Within these guidelines, *Bifidobacterium longum* **35624™** is widely recognized as having strong clinical evidence to support its use in the management of IBS.

Note – The **35624™** strain has been reclassified as belonging to the species *Bifidobacterium longum* (formerly *Bifidobacterium infantis*).



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