

Chapter 1

IBS, Food, and You

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the cause, effects, and triggers of IBS
 - ▶ Watching out for similar conditions
 - ▶ Exploring nutritional and medical treatments for IBS
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Remember the day you found out that you may have IBS? Maybe your doctor offered you the diagnosis along with a prescription for the appropriate intestinal accelerant or depressant. Or maybe you surfed the Internet from your perch on the toilet, entered your list of symptoms into the search engine, and came up with IBS. Either way, finding that diagnosis likely brought some relief because you finally knew that you weren't alone (or crazy) — IBS is real!

Lots of people with IBS try to tough it out on their own without seeking medical treatment (according to some, about 70 percent). We've seen the lists of books our clients have read, the Web sites they've surfed, and the support groups they've attended. We hear your cries of frustration as you sit in front of 17 Web pages that all offer conflicting information about what to do, feel, eat, wear, think, take, and expect for IBS.

Feeling powerless? Well, one major way to take control of your IBS symptoms and your general health is to pay attention to the food you eat, and this chapter shows you just how to do that by providing you with an overview of IBS and how what you eat can affect it.

Following the Food Trail: How Food Is Supposed to Travel through Your System

Irritable bowel syndrome isn't all in your head, but it can make you feel crazy and out of control when it strikes. Most medical professionals agree that IBS doesn't cause any structural changes in the gut, which is why it's still called a

syndrome and not a disease. What IBS does specifically (besides making your life miserable) is change the form and frequency of your bowel movements. No matter the name, know that you can regain control of your body and soothe your IBS symptoms simply by changing what and how you eat. But to do that, you first need to understand how the human body breaks down food so that you can recognize what your body *isn't* doing that's causing you so much discomfort. For even more details on the biology of IBS, check out our *IBS For Dummies* (Wiley).

When you chew food, saliva coats the particles with enzymes that begin the digestive process. Sounds disgusting, but it's very effective because carbs do start breaking down in your mouth. Chewing activates the stomach acid that gets to work on each bite you swallow, focusing on the protein. When your stomach acid sufficiently breaks down a meal, your body sends the mass of pulp out the other end of the stomach into the small intestine. Lipase fat enzymes from the pancreas and bile from the liver attack fats while amylase (an enzyme from the pancreas) continues the digestion of carbs.

The proper muscular movement of gastrointestinal tract (GIT) muscles propels everything through the various stages of digestion and absorption in the small intestine. By the time food reaches the large intestine, it should no longer be food but rather fibers and debris from microorganisms that now have to be excreted. The trip through the large intestine is designed to absorb any extra fluids, but if food particles remain because your small intestine hasn't properly digested them, microorganisms have a feast and can cause the symptoms of gas, bloating, and constipation or diarrhea associated with IBS.

Recognizing IBS' Common Cause and Triggers

The main issues with the GIT aren't unique to IBS. Anyone can suffer gut symptoms but in IBS, the symptoms never seem to stop. The following sections give you clues about what likely causes IBS and the triggers you can avoid to lessen the likelihood of an IBS attack.

Causing IBS

The only medically accepted cause of IBS is a history of having a previous gut infection. In surveys of people with IBS, the only common association that

stands out is an intestinal infection, whether that's stomach flu, food poisoning, traveler's diarrhea, or something else. Whether the infectious organisms or the antibiotics used to treat the infection are the underlying cause is still unclear. The solution, which we talk about in Chapter 5, is to be sure and take probiotics whenever you have a gut infection or take an antibiotic.

Certain people may just be susceptible to IBS, so they may go on to develop chronic symptoms after an acute infection. But medical research isn't complete enough to confirm that theory because we don't know the criteria for being susceptible to IBS.

Triggering an attack

By definition, a *trigger* is something that initiates a process or a reaction. Certain factors may trigger symptoms of IBS in some people. If that sounds vague, that's because it is — each person is unique, and though you and your neighbor may have similar IBS symptoms, your triggers probably aren't the same.

- ✔ **The food you eat:** Yes, sad to say, food is a trigger for IBS. But what type of food triggers you and what type of reaction it triggers is very individual, so Chapter 2 helps you sort out your own personal triggers so that you can use Chapter 3 to put together a friendlier diet.
- ✔ **How you eat:** If you don't chew your food properly, or if you drink too much liquid with your meals, your food remains partially undigested and is fodder for intestinal microorganisms. Not enough hydrochloric acid in your stomach and/or not enough pancreatic enzymes can create similar circumstances. Also, eating large meals might cause the intestinal sphincters between your small and large intestine to open too soon and rush your undigested food through and cause diarrhea.
- ✔ **Previous negative reactions to foods:** If you've had a negative reaction to a food in the past, your brain may decide that that particular food is never going to be good for you and set off alarm bells the next time you're even in its presence. The food doesn't even have to pass your lips before your stomach starts to tighten up as if it's going to war. And the really nasty part of this whole story is that the food in question may not have even caused your symptoms in the first place.
- ✔ **Emotions:** Foods and emotions, especially stress, can trigger the release of serotonin in the gut, leading to some of your symptoms. This connection occurs because an amazingly high 90 percent of the serotonin feel-good hormone in the body arises from the gut.

Stress comes in many forms. In fact, one aspect of IBS can be an uncontrollable urge to control. That may sound like an oxymoron, but it may explain why a loss of control in the intestines is often paralleled by a loss of control in life. Diarrhea is a complete loss of intestinal control, and constipation is a clamping down to try to maintain control, resulting in cramps, pain, and distention. Chapter 5 outlines more details about stress's effects on the gut.

- ✔ **Yeast:** Alone or in combination, the overuse of antibiotics, a high-sugar diet, stress, cortisone, hormones, and other factors can all lead to an overgrowth of yeast in your gut, which can cause some nasty effects. For more info on yeast overgrowth, flip to Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Antibiotics:** Although sometimes they're necessary to kill dangerous bad bacteria and can be life saving, they can also take out the good bacteria in your system. Actually, these drugs aren't too smart; they are supposed to kill off bad bacteria that are causing your symptoms, but instead they mow down every bacteria in their path, throwing the healthy gut flora completely out of balance and opening the door for yeast to migrate from the large intestine to the small intestine, causing symptoms of gas, bloating, and stool changes. Chapter 18 gives you the skinny on the potential problems with antibiotics and yeast.

Take antibiotics when you need them and you can replace the good bacteria with probiotics as we discussed in Chapter 5.



How What You Eat Affects Your IBS

The GIT is always at work moving food through your body while distinguishing between safe and unsafe foods. If you've ever had food poisoning or too much to drink, you know what happens when your GIT rejects the toxic food or drink from your body — usually either vomiting or diarrhea.

Most sources agree that certain foods and even the mere act of eating can trigger symptoms of IBS, but nobody really says why or how that happens. Here's Carolyn's theory after spending 30 years working with patients who have IBS:

Your hard working GIT has evolved through the ages and seen many, many foods, both natural and artificial. If you think back just two or three generations in your own family, you likely have a very different diet than your great-grandparents did. In fact, grandma's comfort food probably had very simple ingredients, and what she mixed together in her homemade chocolate cake recipe is very different than the ingredients on the box of chocolate cake mix sitting in your cupboard.

Food has evolved from these simpler times into tastier, sweeter, richer, easier to prepare, more convenient versions with longer shelf lives. As a result, more foods are prepackaged with lots of added sugar, food additives, fats, and preservatives. Cooks and entrepreneurs have created restaurants that get inexpensive, filling, and tasty food into your system within moments of ordering it, even if that food's nutritional value may be questionable. Your GIT can become so overwhelmed by the variety of sugars, fats, grains, dairy, and food additives you're pumping into it that your system may either latch on to a food as toxic and use diarrhea to dump it or get confused and startled into constipation.

Differentiating from Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

IBD stands for Inflammatory Bowel Disease, which encompasses Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. IBD is a defined disease with definite signs and symptoms. To diagnose IBD, scopes look for signs of tissue inflammation and ulceration. X-rays taken after you take barium can help define areas of narrowing and ulceration. Bleeding and excessive mucus in the stools are the defining symptoms that differentiate IBD from IBS.

Some suggest that IBS may continue worsening and turn into IBD if you don't treat it properly with diet and probiotics. We don't say this to scare you but rather to encourage you to take charge of your condition now instead of putting it off or ignoring it altogether.

Considering Other Ailments Masquerading as IBS

The main four conditions that mimic IBS and can also be triggers for IBS if not treated are celiac disease, yeast overgrowth, lactose intolerance, and food sensitivities and allergies. They all have so many symptoms in common with IBS that you have to understand their subtleties and do some food avoidance and challenging testing (described in Chapter 2) to determine whether your IBS is really one of these ailments. This process of food elimination lets you find out whether your IBS symptoms are really from gluten, yeast overgrowth, lactose intolerance, and food sensitivities or allergies.

Celiac disease

Celiac disease is a genetic condition caused by an immune response to *gluten*, a protein found mainly in three grains (wheat, rye, and barley) and contaminating another grain (oats).



Oats don't actually contain gluten, but they're invariably farmed, stored, and/or milled in facilities that also handle wheat, rye, and barley, so they can be contaminated with tiny trace amounts of gluten — still enough to trigger some people with celiac disease. Some oats are grown, stored, and milled in isolation and bear the gluten-free symbol.

The immune system attacks the gluten, damaging the intestines and impairing their absorption of food. The main symptoms of celiac disease include (but aren't limited to) the following:

- ✓ GI symptoms
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Poor concentration
- ✓ Infertility
- ✓ Weight loss or gain
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Muscle, joint, or bone pain
- ✓ Anemia
- ✓ Fatigue

The treatment for celiac disease is simple: Avoid gluten grains and products that use these grains.

Yeast overgrowth

Yeast is a type of fungus, a cousin to mold and mildew in the form of tiny round buds that grow naturally on your skin and in your intestines. Yeast buds don't have mouths or stomachs — they grow into their food, absorbing sugars in the form of table sugar, milk sugar, fruit sugar, and glucose molecules from simple carbohydrates like bread. When a round yeast bud grows to a critical size, it can no longer absorb enough food through its surface to reach the center, so it breaks off into smaller buds that form their own colonies.



Antibiotics can contribute to yeast overgrowth because they kill all gut bacteria, including the good stuff, leaving room for yeast to take over.

Symptoms of yeast overgrowth include

- ✓ Chronic fatigue
- ✓ Allergies, sinusitis, and asthma
- ✓ Vaginitis or prostatitis

You can starve out yeast by avoiding sugar, wheat, and dairy; see Chapter 18 for more on controlling yeast overgrowth.

Lactose intolerance

Lactose (milk sugar) is what makes milk taste a bit sweet. Up to 75 percent of adults worldwide have diminished capacity to digest dairy products, so lactose intolerance isn't a rare condition. Experts estimate that about 50 million Americans feel the effects of lactose intolerance, and that figure doesn't count the millions who suffer occasionally when they load up on lactose. The reactions occur because undigested dairy becomes fodder for intestinal organisms that feed and breed off your waste. It can also attract water, which makes your stools very runny. The symptoms of lactose intolerance are very much like the symptoms for IBS:

- ✓ Abdominal pain and bloating
- ✓ Constipation
- ✓ Diarrhea (usually very runny)
- ✓ Alternating constipation and diarrhea
- ✓ Cramps
- ✓ Gas
- ✓ Nausea and vomiting

To determine whether your condition is lactose intolerance or dairy-triggered IBS, you can take a lactose tolerance blood test or a hydrogen breath test (lactose intolerance creates an excess of hydrogen in the breath). Your doctor first takes a preliminary reading of either your blood glucose or the amount of hydrogen in your breath, depending on which test you're taking. After you drink a liquid containing lactose, you repeat the test and compare the results. If your blood glucose has suddenly become elevated or your hydrogen breath reading has spiked, you are diagnosed with lactose intolerance, not IBS.

The best way to treat lactose intolerance? Avoiding lactose. In Appendix D, we list many foods that may contain lactose so you can make more informed food choices.

Food allergies and food sensitivities

Food allergies and sensitivities are two separate animals that can both cause IBS-like symptoms. The medical definition of a *food allergy* is a reaction to food causing an immediate reaction with swelling of mucus membranes and a positive IgE blood test showing elevated antibody levels. Strawberries, shellfish, and nuts are some of the big food allergy culprits; if you have an allergy and eat an offending food, your body releases histamines and other chemicals, causing hives, itching, and swelling that can occasionally be life-threatening. Only 1 percent of adults and 3 percent of children suffer IgE food allergies; naturally, if you have a food allergy, you want to identify and avoid that food.

Chronic food allergies can take up to 48 hours to appear, so associating them with food intake can be difficult unless you do the avoidance and challenge testing we talk about in Chapter 2. Dairy, wheat, soy, and corn are common IgG food allergies, and a positive test shows a higher level of IgG antibodies. Unfortunately, most doctors only recognize IgE food allergies and not the IgG kind, so you often have to do the dietary testing yourself to make your own diagnosis. Many nutritionally oriented doctors perform the IgG allergy tests to determine food allergies, but Carolyn finds that the food avoidance and challenge testing works just as well or even better.



You can take IgG food allergy blood tests, but if you have a leaky gut (which we discuss in Chapter 18), molecules of undigested food can be absorbed from the gut into the bloodstream. Your immune system attacks those molecules with IgG antibodies and can give you a false positive IgG test result for just about every food you're eating.

Food sensitivities are foods that you may have identified as unique triggers for your symptoms without any clear medical reason. The designation *food sensitivity* is more in the realm of inability to digest a particular food, with symptoms of mucus, nausea, or upset stomach after eating. You may burp after a pizza due to inability to digest green peppers, or dairy products may give you mucus and you find yourself clearing your throat after drinking a milkshake. Many foods that cause symptoms in people with IBS are labeled food sensitivities. That's where a food diary and avoiding and challenging foods become very important tools. (Head to Chapter 2 for guidance on creating a food diary.)

Treating Your Symptoms With Nutrition: What an IBS-Friendly Diet Looks Like

The definition of *medicine* as Carolyn learned it in medical school is the diagnosis of disease and the treatment of disease symptoms with drugs. We'd rather show you ways of treating IBS to relieve the condition, but there may be times when you need symptomatic treatment. The following sections give you tips on controlling your symptoms with diet, natural remedies, and medicine.

To get a good visual of an IBS-friendly diet, take a look at the color section near the middle of this book. A diet that provides you and your sensitive stomach with delicious, safe foods doesn't have a lot of garbage associated with it. We're talking about the ingredients and the packaging here — if you're eating fat-laden cuisine out of a bag, wrapper, or cardboard container that's going to end up in your trash can, it's very likely not IBS-friendly. If you've prepared the meal yourself from fresh ingredients, your gut is far more likely to thank you later. After you identify your personal triggers (see Chapter 2), Chapter 3 shows you how to transition away from triggers and trash and into a healthy-yet-tasty alternative.



To get you started on this friendly path, check out the recipes in Part II — 120 delightful dishes for your mouth and your stomach.

Supplementing a Healthy Diet

Whether or not you have IBS, supplements are important to create and maintain a healthy body. Many doctors argue that you can get all your vitamins and minerals from a healthy, balanced diet, but that's becoming harder and harder as heavy industrialized farming strips minerals from the soil without properly replacing them.



Don't assume that enriched foods — bread products with B vitamins, sugared yogurt with probiotics, milk with extra calcium — are totally healthy. The synthetic supplements manufacturers add don't completely make up for the actual nutrition that's been refined, processed, and bleached away.

If you have IBS-C, your colon is holding a lot of waste hostage in your body. You need a good antioxidant supplement to counteract the toxicity and a probiotic to fight off the fiendish bacteria roaming your body. IBS-D sufferers

may often have the sense that they're losing their lunches before they've had time to absorb it. As a result, their bodies may be depleted of necessary nutrients, and a good-quality multivitamin is essential.



Studies that say vitamins are dangerous or ineffective are usually testing synthetic supplements and not the food-based nutrients that come from nature. And no supplement is an acceptable replacement for improving your diet and lifestyle.

Making magnesium your new best friend

Magnesium tops our list as the number one supplement for anyone because it's crucial for your health, it's simple to take, it's inexpensive, and it's effective in the proper forms whether you have IBS-C or IBS-D. Magnesium is necessary for the proper function of more than 325 different enzymes in the body, and maintaining adequate magnesium levels can ease the pain and spasms of IBS symptoms and make having such an illness a little less uncomfortable. The symptoms of magnesium deficiency include muscle spasms, palpitations, hypertension, insomnia, migraines, PMS, depression, and anxiety and panic attacks. Another major symptom is moderate fatigue — not just general tiredness but rather a distinct lack of energy that, when coupled with IBS, compromises your body's healing resources.



Most people don't think of having a magnesium deficiency because the symptoms are associated with so many other conditions. But being deficient in magnesium can affect your overall health because you're operating your body without all its vital components. And most doctors don't recognize a magnesium deficiency because no test in standard lab work accurately identifies it.

Magnesium is a great natural laxative, so it's very helpful if you have IBS-C to take a magnesium citrate powder in water or a magnesium dimalate tablet if you would rather swallow a pill. Recent research has also turned up two forms of magnesium that work for IBS-D: magnesium oil and angstrom-sized magnesium. The following list covers these and other helpful forms of magnesium.

- ✓ **Magnesium oil:** Although it's not technically an oil, magnesium chloride highly concentrated in distilled water has a slightly oily consistency. You spray or rub the oil on your skin, so it doesn't reach your intestines and cause a laxative effect (unless you bathe in a few gallons of it). Research shows that applying a solution of magnesium oil to your skin restores levels within your tissues in four to six weeks. The minimum daily dose is 400 milligrams or about 20 sprays if you're using a spray

bottle. You can dilute the oil with distilled water if it burns or tingles slightly; leave the oil on all day, or wash it off after at least 30 minutes if you prefer.

- ✓ **Angstrom minerals:** Good things come in small packages, and the smaller the magnesium particle, the more likely it's able to pass through the miniscule openings in the cell walls. Fortunately, magnesium and other minerals come in atom-sized packages called *angstrom*. The dosage for angstrom minerals is between five and ten times less than the common brands on the shelf. It comes in liquid form, and a dose is about 40 milligrams (2 tablespoons) twice a day taken with or without food in a small glass of water.

On her blog, Carolyn has gotten numerous testimonials from people who have switched to angstrom minerals (especially magnesium) and found enormous benefits. One woman wrote, "The (angstrom) magnesium works much faster than the taurate capsules. Sleeping even better, relaxed muscles, just calmer. I will continue taking this form of magnesium from now on." If you're looking for angstrom, the source we trust is www.completeh2ominerals.com.

- ✓ **Magnesium from food:** Seaweed and chocolate both have very high amounts of magnesium. We know how exciting the chocolate part sounds, but remember that we're talking about the 100-percent raw, bitter chocolate called *cacao*. Even so, Carolyn's Chocolate Banana Cream Pudding (see the recipe in Chapter 13) is a delicious magnesium supplement containing banana (33 milligrams for 4 ounces), coconut milk (100 milligrams per cup) and raw chocolate (100 milligrams for 2 tablespoons).

Other foods rich in magnesium are nuts, seeds, deep green leafy vegetables, and whole grains. You may think that these foods are off limits, but that's not the case. Our Basic Seed or Nut Pâté (see the recipe in Chapter 7) is a blend of nuts or seeds, lemon juice, sea salt, and garlic and is extremely high in magnesium. Deep green leafy vegetables may be a stretch for you but consider juicing greens or even blending your salad to a consistency that your tummy can tolerate.

Making room for other important vitamins and minerals

We don't deal too deeply with supplements in this book because our focus is on treating your IBS with food, but we want to make you aware of the most beneficial nutrients for your gut. The most important nutrients after magnesium are vitamin D, zinc, calcium, and vitamin A. Of course, you could make a

case for any of the other 44 vitamins and minerals, but the following list just aims to get you started on the basics.

- ✓ **Vitamin D:** Vitamin D research is in its infancy, but so far it has shown that vitamin D affects most of the body's tissues. Current research links vitamin D deficiency with 17 different types of cancer (including breast cancer) and many other illnesses like osteoporosis, heart disease and juvenile diabetes. According to Dr. Soram Khalsa, author of *The Vitamin D Revolution* (HayHouse) having adequate vitamin D intake (2,000 IU a day year round) provides you with overall health benefits that may translate into the lessening of your IBS symptoms. Vitamin D is very difficult to get in your diet; in order to get 2,000 IU a day, you would have to drink 20 glasses of milk or eat 10 cans of tuna, but as vitamin D3, it's an easy-to-take supplement that may speed up the healing of damaged tissues and cells. Sun exposure does give you lots of vitamin D, but only at certain times of the day and certain times of the year.
- ✓ **Zinc:** Researchers say that fast-healing humans have high levels of zinc in their tissues. Almost 100 body enzymes depend on zinc to make them work properly; that's less than the 325 powered by magnesium (see the preceding section), but it's still pretty impressive. Many of these enzymes deal with tissue growth and repair and may just help those with leaky gut (which we discuss in Chapter 18). Sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, and oysters are good sources of zinc; our Basic Seed or Nut Pâté in Chapter 7 helps you easily obtain your daily dose of zinc (which in tablet form is 10 to 15 milligrams and in liquid angstrom form is 20 milligrams per day).
- ✓ **Calcium:** Calcium is the most abundant mineral in the body, helping to create your bones and teeth. It's also the most commonly used mineral supplement. Calcium is crucial for heart health because it makes muscles, including the heart muscle, contract. It neutralizes acidity in the body, activates enzymes, promotes cell division, and allows the transport of nutrients through cell membranes.

Although it's famously associated with dairy products, better sources for those with dairy triggers are whole grains, nuts, and seeds. Despite dairy concerns, yogurt is a good source of calcium and its beneficial probiotics may also slow down diarrhea. You can find dairy and non-dairy yogurt recipes in Chapter 6.

You may see calcium recommended as a treatment for IBS because of its tendency to cause constipation, but we must warn you of the dangers of taking too much calcium. Carolyn receives reports from doctors and clients who tell her they are developing complications (including gall stones, kidney stones, and magnesium deficiency) possibly caused by overuse and overprescription of over-the-counter calcium tablets.



Excess calcium sticks around in the body, building up in tissues and throwing your magnesium levels out of balance. Carolyn now only recommends 20 milligrams of calcium liquid angstrom supplement twice a day.

- ✓ **Vitamin A:** Vitamin A is important for healthy skin — both your outside skin and the inside skin of your lungs and gut. If you have vitamin A deficiency, symptoms of IBS-D can worsen because the mucus membranes of the gut are not as strong and healthy. At the same time, diarrhea can cause loss of vitamin A. Supplemental vitamin A usually comes from cod liver oil, but some food sources include colorful (dark green, yellow, orange, and red) vegetables and fruits, including spinach, pumpkins, peppers, squash, carrots, yellow peaches, apricots, papayas, and mangoes. It's also found in high amounts in egg yolks, although some folks with IBS may be avoiding those (see Chapter 6). The recommended daily intake for vitamin A is 3,000 IU, but we suggest at least 5,000 IU per day, which you can usually get in 1 teaspoon of cod liver oil.

Using digestive supplements to help digest your food

When we give people the choice to chew each bite of food 40 times or take a digestive supplement, they usually go for the supplement, but we wish people would choose chewing (or at least chewing *and* a supplement). Chewing well lets you do one-third of your digesting in your mouth with salivary enzymes. Plus, it also alerts the rest of the GIT to get ready for dinner. If your food isn't well-chewed and fully digested as it makes its way through the digestive tract, some of it reaches the intestines in particle sizes that are difficult to absorb, leaving fodder for microorganisms to power up on so they can set off your symptoms later.

- ✓ **Digestive enzymes:** Most digestive enzymes contain amylase, betaine hydrochloride, lipase, and peptidase, and the vegetarian formulas contain bromelain and papain from pineapple and papaya. Take one or two in the middle or at the end of your meal to help relieve symptoms of gas, bloating, and belching. Another remedy that is effective and less expensive is to take 1 to 3 teaspoons of organic apple cider vinegar in 4 ounces of water before and/or during a meal.
- ✓ **Probiotics:** Countless recent studies have shown the importance of *probiotics* (good bacteria) for the GIT in promoting fermentation to assist digestion and maintaining an appropriate pH in the large intestine to deter invading bacteria. Probiotics are the answer to the good bacteria



vacuum created by antibiotics; bifidus and lactobacillus acidophilus are examples of helpful probiotics you can take. The optimum dosage range for probiotics is from 2 to 10 billion active cells daily. Make sure the label on your product guarantees this number through the expiration date.

- ✓ **Herbs:** Many herbs have been used for centuries to treat gut symptoms and assist digestion. The best herbs for the gut are *demulcents*, or substances that have the ability to form a soothing film over a mucus membrane to protect enzyme function and areas that absorb nutrients. You get the very gooey picture of that process when you think of slippery elm bark, aloe vera, Irish moss, and the newest protein powder on the block, chia seeds. Jelly-like and cooling, they're anti-inflammatory and soothing.

Be sure to use aloe vera and not the laxative aloe latex products. The safest aloe vera we know is George's Aloe.

Here are some suitable herbs that can help take the spasm and bloating out of the gut, making digesting food and absorbing nutrients much easier. Check out *IBS For Dummies* (Wiley) for more information:

- **Peppermint oil:** Relaxes the intestines and relieves bloating
- **Fennel:** Antispasmodic that eliminates gas and bloating
- **Ginger:** Antispasmodic that relieves nausea and indigestion
- **Chamomile:** Antispasmodic and anti-inflammatory that relieves anxiety
- **Caraway:** Antispasmodic that relieves gas and aids digestion
- **Anise:** Relieves gas and bloating, settles the bowel, and has anti-fungal properties
- **Oregano:** Relieves nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and muscle spasms and has antifungal and antibacterial properties
- **Angelica root (*dong quai*):** Relieves intestinal cramps, gas, and bloating
- **Bitter herbs such as bitter orange peel, gentian root, artichoke leaf, areca seed, and dandelion root:** Stimulate gastric juices and increase bile production
- **Areca seed:** Relieves abdominal distention and constipation and has antiparasitic properties

Beginning the Healing Process

Adopting an IBS friendly diet begins at home — right in your own kitchen. Although thinking about everything you have to do may feel overwhelming right now, remember to be patient with yourself and know that you're at the beginning of your healing process and in charge of how fast or slow you move through this transition.

Everything seems a bit easier when you break it down into steps, so one of the first things to do is get the offending foods out of your kitchen (or at least your line of vision). Chapter 4 shows you how to chuck the junk and stock up on IBS-friendly foods, whether you live alone or with others who don't have IBS.

The shopping tips in Chapter 4 are especially helpful as you load up on the ingredients for the recipes in Part II. Whether you are new to the kitchen or a seasoned cook, the recipes are easy to follow and feature easy-to-find, IBS-friendly ingredients. The recipes may even show you some new ways to cook and prepare food.

But there's also life outside your kitchen, and we've got lots of tips for eating away from home in Chapter 14. Whether it's lunch at the office, dinner at a restaurant, or a family gathering, our tips help you prepare for safe and fun meals. You are on the path to a healthier way to eat.

