

Controlling Irritable Bowel Syndrome with the Rice Diet: A Pleasant Fringe Benefit

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PURPOSE:

To assess the effect of the Rice Diet on Obese Patients with the Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

METHODS:

50 obese patients (pts) were placed on an outpatient Rice Diet (RD) program as part of a private gastroenterology practice in Altamonte Springs, FL. This is low sodium, low fat and low protein diet. The first 1-2 weeks are comprised of rice and fruits. Week 3 adds vegetables and in week 4 small amounts of fish, chicken, eggs, beans and grains are permitted. Exact dietary contents depended on concomitant medical problems, such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and hyperlipidemia. Patients filled out questionnaires weekly, responding to general questions of their state of being as well as bowel related symptoms such as bloating, gas, belching, diarrhea, constipation, and fecal urgency.

RESULTS:

All 50 pts completed 1 month of the Rice Diet. There were 9 pts who had active IBS and all were on anticholinergic medications. Within 1 week, 3 pts noted marked improvement in IBS symptoms, and by 2 weeks all 9 had resolved >75-90% of symptoms of gas, bloating, belching, fecal urgency or diarrhea. None had primarily constipation dominant IBS. By 4 weeks, all 9 pts remained much improved, with 5/9 completely off all medication and 4/9 taking anticholinergics only as needed. 35 pts completed 8 weeks of the RD and all 9 IBS pts remained in their improved state, unchanged from week 4.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The Rice Diet is an elimination type diet providing very low sodium, fat and protein. In this observational study the Rice Diet was successful in eliminating up to 90% of IBS symptoms within 2-4 weeks on the diet. Most pts were able to discontinue anticholinergic medication and there were sustained benefits up to 8 weeks on a modified diet.
2. There may be a role for treating IBS pts with short courses of RD instead of medication in motivated individuals.