

Onions and low FODMAP diets

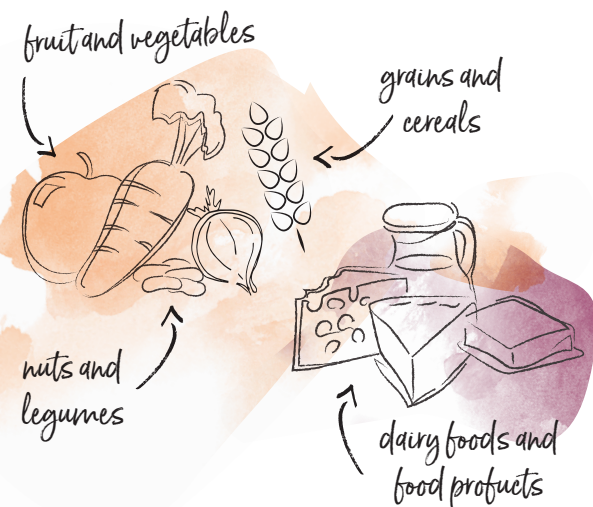
A low FODMAP diet is used to help people manage the symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). Onions are often avoided during the elimination phase of the diet, as they contain fructans. However, with some clever cooking tips, you can still enjoy the taste of onions even when you're on a low FODMAP diet.



What are FODMAPs?

FODMAPs are carbohydrates that are not completely digested in the intestine. They are fermented by gut bacteria, attracting water in the intestine and producing gas. This can cause the intestine wall to expand, resulting in pain and discomfort for people with highly sensitive guts.

FODMAPs are found in a wide variety of foods, including:



What is a low FODMAP diet?

A low FODMAP diet is used to help manage symptoms of IBS.^{1,2}

IBS affects about 30% of Australians and women are more likely to be affected than men.³ IBS can be caused by a combination of factors including gut infection or illness, lifestyle factors such as stress, as well as certain trigger foods.

The aim of a low FODMAP diet is to identify specific FODMAPs that trigger symptoms, as well as the FODMAPs a person can tolerate.

Starting a low FODMAP diet

A low FODMAP diet is complex and it should only be followed with the supervision of a qualified health professional, such as an Accredited Practising Dietitian or your doctor.²

The diet involves three stages: elimination, reintroduction and personalisation.

A health professional can help identify the foods to exclude during the elimination phase of the diet, as well as when and how to reintroduce foods once symptoms subside.

People with IBS may not be sensitive to all FODMAPs. It is crucial to follow all phases of the diet, so only trigger foods are eliminated and a tolerance threshold of the other problematic foods is established. This will ensure you can enjoy a diet that is less restrictive and nutritionally balanced.

FODMAP stands for:

Fermentable

Oligosaccharides (fructans & galacto-oligosaccharides)

Disaccharides (lactose)

Monosaccharides (fructose)

And

Polyols (e.g. sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, maltitol)



Fructans and onions

Fructans are a type of fermentable oligosaccharide (FOS) and they are found in onions.

Fructans pass through the gastrointestinal tract undigested and are fermented in the large intestine. For most people, fructans are food for the gut microbiome and promote the growth of healthy bacteria, such as bifidobacteria and lactobacillus.⁴

For people with highly sensitive guts, such as those with IBS, fructans can cause gastrointestinal symptoms.³



Half an onion (75g) contains 1.4g of fructans, which contributes to your total daily fibre intake



Reintroducing onions on a low FODMAP diet

After the elimination phase is completed, onions can be used as a test food to determine if someone reacts to fructans. Many people can tolerate small amounts of onion and benefit from the fibre and nutrients in onions that support gut health. A health professional can provide advice about how to include onions during the reintroduction phase of a low FODMAP diet.

How to enjoy onions on a low FODMAP diet

You can still enjoy the taste of Australian onions when following a low FODMAP diet. Fructans are not fat soluble, so you can use oil to infuse delicious onion flavours into your meals. Here's how:

- Add large onion pieces to oil-based dishes, such as stir fries or roast vegetables. Cook and then simply remove the onion before eating.
- Include onion pieces in your homemade, oil-based salad dressing to enhance the flavour. Simply remove the onion before using.
- Alternatively, use an onion-infused cooking oil.

Fructans are water soluble, so it is best to avoid adding onions to water-based dishes, such as soups and casseroles.

Roast veggies with red onion and dukkah



Find more delicious recipes at:
www.australianonions.com.au/recipes

References:

1. Staudacher HM, et al. The low FODMAP diet: recent advances in understanding its mechanisms and efficacy in IBS <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28592442/>. S. Gut. 2017 Aug;66(8):1517-1527. doi: 10.1136/gutjnl-2017-313750. Epub 2017 Jun 7. PMID: 28592442. 2. Lomer MCE. The low FODMAP diet in clinical practice: where are we and what are the long-term considerations? Proc Nutr Soc. 2024 Feb;83(1):17-27. doi: 10.1017/S0029665123003579. Epub 2023 Jul 7. PMID: 37415490. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37415490/> 3. <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs#causes> 4. Hughes RL, et al. The Prebiotic Potential of Inulin-Type Fructans: A Systematic Review. Adv Nutr. 2022 Mar;13(2):492-529. doi: 10.1093/advances/nmab119. Epub 2023 Feb 10. PMID: 34555168; PMCID: PMC8970830. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8970830/>

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