

Understanding SIBO

Could This Explain Your Digestive Symptoms?

What is SIBO?

SIBO stands for **Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth**. Simply put, it's when bacteria that should live in your large intestine (colon) migrate up and take residence in your small intestine, where they don't belong.

Think of it like having guests who've overstayed their welcome and moved into the wrong room of your house - they're not necessarily "bad" bacteria, they're just in the wrong place causing problems.

Why Your Symptoms Make Sense with SIBO

Your Previous Pattern:

- Not passing regular stools (constipation), especially when you're busy or anxious
- Loose stools after heavy meals
- Bloating and gas when you increase fibre
- Energy slumps throughout the day
- Recent cholesterol elevation (10mmol/L)
- Ongoing nutrient absorption challenges despite supplementation

How SIBO could be explained as a factor:

1. **The Fibre Problem:** Normally, fibre should help your digestion. But when you have SIBO, fibre feeds the bacteria in the wrong place (your small intestine), causing gas, bloating, and discomfort. This is why increasing fibre makes you feel worse instead of better.
2. **The Stress-Constipation Connection:** When you're busy or anxious, your gut slows down even more. SIBO bacteria already slow your gut's natural movement, and stress makes this worse, leading to constipation during your busiest times.
3. **The Heavy Meal Pattern:** After large meals, the bacteria ferment the food rapidly, creating gas and toxins that your body wants to "flush out" quickly, causing loose stools.
4. **The Energy Connection:** SIBO bacteria can interfere with nutrient absorption and create inflammatory compounds that contribute to fatigue and energy slumps throughout the day.
5. **The Cholesterol Connection:** SIBO bacteria can damage your bile acids (which help digest fats and regulate cholesterol). When bile acids are damaged, your liver has to work harder and produces more cholesterol to make new bile acids. This could explain your recent cholesterol elevation despite maintaining a healthy diet.
6. **The Nutrient Absorption Problem:** SIBO bacteria consume nutrients before your body can absorb them, and they damage the intestinal lining where

absorption occurs. This explains why you're still having nutrient absorption challenges (like low Vitamin D) despite taking supplements.

Why You Might Be More Prone to SIBO

Several factors make you more susceptible:

- **Gilbert's Syndrome:** Affects bile production, and bile helps keep bacteria in check and aids proper digestion
- **Previous Giardia infection:** Even borderline infections can damage the gut lining and disrupt your gut's natural "housekeeping" system that prevents bacteria from migrating upward
- **Recent UTI:** Urinary tract infections can sometimes indicate broader issues with bacterial balance in your system
- **Stress levels:** Chronic stress (from work, family responsibilities, health concerns) slows gut motility, allowing bacteria to migrate upward
- **Fat processing challenges:** Often goes hand-in-hand with SIBO, creating a cycle of poor digestion

The Good News

SIBO is:

- ✓ **Treatable** - Various effective treatment options available
- ✓ **Explainable** - Finally having an answer for confusing symptoms
- ✓ **Manageable** - Once identified, we can create a targeted plan

What Could Improve with SIBO Treatment?

If SIBO is confirmed and treated successfully, you could see improvements in:

Digestive Function:

- Better fat digestion and less digestive urgency after meals
- Reduced bloating and gas when eating fibre
- More regular, comfortable bowel movements

Nutrient Absorption:

- Better absorption of vitamins and minerals from food and supplements
- Improved Vitamin D levels despite your Gilbert's syndrome
- Enhanced energy levels from better nutrient utilisation

Cholesterol Levels:

- Potential normalisation of cholesterol as bile acid function improves
- Better fat processing overall

Energy and Mood:

- More consistent energy throughout the day
- Reduced energy slumps as nutrient absorption improves
- Less irritability, particularly during busy periods

Important Note: While SIBO treatment can significantly improve how well your existing bile acids work, your Gilbert's syndrome will still require ongoing support through regular meal timing and bile-supporting nutrition. Think of it as optimising what you have rather than changing your underlying capacity.

How We Test for SIBO

The **SIBO Breath Test** is simple and non-invasive:

- You drink a sugar solution at home
- Collect breath samples in small tubes over 3 hours
- The test detects gases produced by bacteria in the wrong place
- Results show us exactly what type of SIBO you might have

Which Test is Best for You?

Based on your specific symptoms, I recommend the **SIBO Advanced Test (Lactulose + Glucose) - \$372.90 including GST**. Here's why this test is most suitable for your situation:

Note: A basic SIBO test (lactulose only) is available for \$214.50 including GST, however, given your complex symptom pattern, the advanced test provides much better diagnostic value.

Your Complex Symptom Pattern Needs Comprehensive Testing:

- Your mixed symptoms (constipation when stressed + loose stools after heavy meals) suggest bacteria may be present throughout different areas of your small intestine
- Fibre intolerance combined with stress-related digestive changes indicates what we call "mixed-type SIBO"
- This requires testing both sections of the small intestine for accurate diagnosis

Why Dual Testing (Lactulose + Glucose):

- **Lactulose:** Tests the entire small intestine (gold standard for SIBO)
- **Glucose:** Tests the first part of the small intestine with higher sensitivity
- **Together:** They catch more cases than single tests, ensuring we don't miss bacteria in any location

Why This Matters for Your Treatment:

- A single-substrate test might miss bacteria in parts of your small intestine
- Missing a diagnosis could mean continuing with ineffective treatments
- Comprehensive testing guides the most targeted treatment approach
- Given your history of multiple health challenges, we want to get the most complete picture possible

Investment vs. Outcome:

- While the comprehensive test costs more than basic testing, it provides significantly more diagnostic information
- This could prevent the need for retesting or multiple treatment attempts
- For your complex presentation, the additional investment in thorough testing is worthwhile

Why Testing Makes Sense for You

Without knowing if SIBO is present, we're essentially:

- Treating symptoms rather than the root cause
- Potentially making things worse (like with fibre recommendations)
- Missing the opportunity for targeted, effective treatment

With a SIBO diagnosis, we can:

- Create a specific treatment protocol

- Understand why certain foods make you feel worse
- Develop a long-term management strategy
- Address the underlying cause of your digestive symptoms

What Happens Next?

If you choose to proceed with testing:

1. **Simple home test** - I'll arrange everything for you
2. **Continue current support** - Your supplements can continue during testing
3. **Results review** - We'll discuss findings and create a targeted plan
4. **Targeted treatment** - Address the root cause, not just symptoms

Your Choice

This test could provide the missing piece of your health puzzle. Your symptoms - the mixed stool patterns, fibre intolerance, and digestive unpredictability - all point to SIBO as a likely explanation.

Understanding what's happening in your gut could finally give us the roadmap to help you feel consistently better.

Questions? Reach out. I'm here to support whatever decision feels right for you.

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