

# IBS TREATMENT CENTER

Get out of the bathroom and get back to your life!

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Survival Tactics for an IBS Holiday: 7 Tips to Preserve Your Sanity and Enjoy Life

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## Survival Tactics for an IBS Holiday:

### 7 Tips to Preserve Your Sanity and Enjoy Life.

Bruce loves the holidays. And he dreads them, too. It's a mixed bag of joy and nervous anticipation. He looks forward to seeing family and friends, of course, but his unpredictable digestive system makes him anxious about traveling and dinner parties—two major components of the holidays. IBS takes the fun out of this time of year for Bruce and many others. Maybe you understand how Bruce feels.

At home, Bruce manages his IBS with a fairly strict daily routine. He gets up early to take care of his bathroom business before he goes to work. At work, his cubicle is strategically close to the bathroom in case of emergencies. He eats a limited range of foods that don't cause him discomfort. And when he goes out, he tends to visit the same places where he knows the bathrooms are well maintained. It's not a pleasant or perfect routine, but it gets him by for the most part. Traveling is an entirely different story.

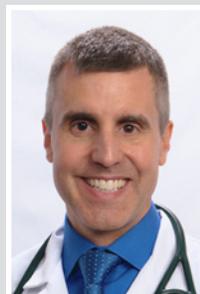
Every year, Bruce gets anxious about the trip to visit his family for the holidays. Will he get there without an embarrassing incident? Will the drive be miserable because of his constant worry of finding a bathroom when he urgently needs one?

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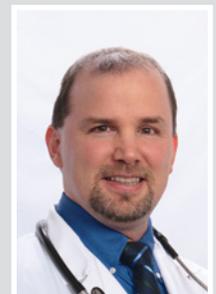
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Dr. Stephen Wangen



Dr. Heath McAllister



Dr. Ken Pentland



## Survival Tactics, continued

Would flying be any better? Yes, there is a bathroom in the plane, but you aren't allowed out of your seat for much of the flight. And Bruce can't be sure a bathroom will be available when he needs it. How long could he stay in there without raising suspicion? Would the passengers seated nearby be able to hear what's going on in there? What if the captain turns on the seatbelt light when he's in the middle of doing his business? None of these thoughts help Bruce's anxiety.

And then there is the problem of what to eat while he's away from home. Family dinners and fancy restaurants are supposed to be fun, but Bruce can never be sure if they will end well. While catching up, reminiscing, and joking with loved ones, the thoughts in the back of his mind are about whether he'll have a sudden need to rush to the bathroom and if it will be available when he is desperate.

Bruce doesn't want to be rude by being picky about what goes on his plate, but it's hard to tell which dishes will trigger an episode. Plus, dining at restaurants always seems to bring out the worst in Bruce's digestion issues. He can't figure out why restaurant food should be worse on his digestive tract than a home-cooked meal, but it often causes him problems. The unpredictability of dining out is stressful for Bruce.

For years, Bruce's doctors told him that being anxious makes his irritable bowel condition worse. For many people, it's actually the other way around.

It would be easier for Bruce if he just stayed home alone. But no one should have to forsake the holidays because of digestive problems. Your friends and family are an important part of your life and it is especially nice to be with them at this time of the year.

Fortunately, Bruce has developed some tactics that make the holidays less nerve-wracking and more enjoyable. Here are 7 tips to help you not only survive, but actually enjoy the holiday season.

### 1 Shop for gifts online.

You can get just about anything online these days. And what better way to relieve the anxiety of venturing out than by getting all your shopping done from home? This is an easy one that can make a big difference.



### 2 Get a bathroom app.

Your smart phone is smarter than you think. It can locate the nearest bathroom just about anywhere you are, and you can read reviews about its cleanliness and comfort ahead of time. This is great for planning your travel route and will help you feel more confident on the road. And while you're sitting there, why not add your own review? It's better than scratching your favorite prose on the stall wall! Some of the most popular apps for both Androids and iPhones are Toilet Finder, SitOrSquat (by Charmin®), and Flushd.



### 3 Be a giver.

This works if you already have some idea about how to manage your diet to minimize your episodes of bowel distress by managing your diet. When it comes to dinner parties, bring or prepare a dish or two that you know won't cause you problems. And make it tasty so everyone will enjoy it. You don't need to tell them your dish is special or different. Just tell them it's something you wanted to share.

### 5 Research the restaurant.

Once you know where you'll be dining, call ahead to find out what your options will be. Can they accommodate a special request if you ask for a modification of a menu item? Or can they make you something that would suit you better? Even looking at the menu online before you go can help you plan. Doing a bit of research means you won't have to ask your server as many questions to learn about your options, and you won't have to work as hard to communicate your needs.

### 7 Decorate your bathroom.

Yes, you read that right. If you're going to be spending some extended time there, why not make it more festive? Put something fun in the loo to commemorate the season.

Bruce discovered hosting parties and bringing dishes to other people's homes turned out to be a lot more fun than he thought it would be. He perfected his techniques and ingredients for a few great dishes that guests always enjoyed. Even his new girlfriend was impressed! She thought his festive bathroom was cute, too.

But Bruce has put his holiday stresses and strategies in the past and no longer needs these survival tactics. Bruce doesn't worry about the holidays anymore because he no longer has IBS. He travels and socializes whenever he wants, and the only concern he faces during the holidays is how to look grateful when Aunt Judy forces her fruitcake on him. His anxiety is gone and he can now focus on enjoying life all year long.

How did Bruce do it?

He found a doctor who could help him fix the problem instead of just coping with it. There is an old saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." That makes a lot of sense when it is working fine to begin with. But what about the flip side? "If it's broke, fix it!" Bruce did, and he gave himself the best gift he could imagine, one for which he is grateful day after day—finally a life without IBS.

*Disclaimer: The character in this story represents a combination of true stories taken from several patients. Our clients generally experience significant improvement in their digestive health, but individual results may vary*

### 4 Eat before you go.

This is a simple and effective idea that can make the difference between feeling good and rushing out of the party. If you know what is safe for you to eat, then eating ahead of time will help with two problems. First, you'll be more confident about venturing out of the house. Second, you will already be full so you won't be as tempted to consume other things that could cause you trouble.

### 6 Be the host.

Hosting the party allows you to control all the variables. You decide what food is available. Your own, comfortable bathroom is nearby. You don't have to travel anywhere. And it's fun! Invite your friends and relatives over and enjoy the holidays by relaxing at home.



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## Activities

December 2nd, Support Group Meeting at 7pm @ Office

<http://www.meetup.com/NE-Seattle-Gluten-Free-Food-Allergy-and-IBS-Support-Group>

January 17 and 18th, Dr. Stephen Wangen @ Vancouver Canada

(The Gluten Free Expo)

<http://www.glutenfreeexpo.ca/bc/vancouver/>

February 7th, Dr. Stephen Wangen @ San Diego

(Gluten Free and Allergy Free Expo)

<http://gfafexpo.com/locations/san-diego-ca-2015/>

