

Ancient wheat: A fix for Irritable Bowel Syndrome?

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Numerous scientific studies have described and explored the role of wheat in various common digestive disorders. Now, *Triticum turgidum* subsp. *turanicum*, known as 'ancient' wheat, has been shown to be beneficial for Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), improving the symptoms of this disease. Could this wheat variety be a potential fix for IBS patients?

Triticum turgidum subsp. *turanicum* wheat, also known as Khorasan, is an ancient type of grain. This ancient grain originates from the Fertile Crescent and derives its common name from the Persian province of Khorasan. Nowadays, it is sold in some health food stores under the name "kamut".

In a double-blinded randomized dietary intervention trial, researchers examined whether or not this ancient wheat might be less likely to cause digestive issues in IBS patients. Twenty IBS patients were instructed to exclude all grain products, except either modern wheat (control group) or ancient Khorasan wheat, for six weeks, from their diet. The patients' symptoms were then scored via a questionnaire and by monitoring their inflammatory markers.

IBS patients eating the ancient wheat reported significantly less bloating, fatigue, and abdominal pain, but also better stool consistency. Furthermore, the study noted that the patients eating the ancient wheat had lower levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines.

In summary, this study showed significant improvements in both IBS symptoms and the inflammatory profile of patients suffering from this syndrome, after the ingestion of ancient wheat products.

Can the ingestion of ancient wheat therefore be seen as a potential fix for IBS?

Unfortunately, the number of patients in this study was not large enough to allow for such a conclusion to be drawn. A larger study would be required in order to solidify these interesting findings. Furthermore, it is a little premature to conclude that modern wheat is inflammatory. It may actually be that the ancient wheat has anti-inflammatory properties. While the present study demonstrates an improvement in the inflammatory profile, the specific role of cytokines in IBS is still not fully understood. It's also worth noting that different varieties of wheat show different prebiotic effects on the gut micro flora. Khorasan wheat seems to be one of the better prebiotic varieties, feeding potentially beneficial gut flora (*Journal of Science of Food and Agriculture* 2012). Therefore, it is likely that the beneficial effects of Khorasan wheat on IBS symptoms are attributable to synergistic effects.

Even though this study is small and has various shortcomings, it raises the interesting question whether a switch away from modern wheat towards ancient grain types could be beneficial for IBS patients. However, further studies with larger patient numbers would be necessary in order to confirm this dietary approach and its beneficial effects on people suffering from this syndrome.