

MAGNESIUM: Does it help with IBS?**(A review of the reported experience of some people living with IBS)**

Here are slightly edited versions of reports from people (living with IBS) giving their experience with Magnesium.

I (Julia Rhodes, hereafter JR) have made brief comments drawing interpretations and learnings from these reports. (This is a desk-top review.) My overall perspective is that magnesium is helpful for IBS(C) in particular, especially so in combo with a series of colonics, hence WLCs signature Magnesium Cleanse. I am not a great fan of the use of magnesium just on its own; it is then a palliative, ie it doesn't restore functionality.

Case reports from people living with IBS - Drawn from an IBS web forum

Case 1. I decided to try magnesium againthe results are fantastic. I take 750mg to 1000mg *each night before bed as I find an empty stomach gives better results.*
Benefits: I do not suffer with bloating, cramps or wind and I don't have that heavy uncomfortable feeling in my tummy. Recommended.

Case 2. I took magnesium ... for IBS-C. Everything I tried would work for a while but then stop working . (I tried magnesium, taking one pill at night at first and it worked perfectly, giving me one or two BMs a day (instead of maybe one a week).

Down side: I found I had to keep increasing my dose and, after a year or so, I realized I was taking three or four pills at night (with vitamin C) just to have a BM. (Also I was very tired and my stomach was just not right and felt sour all the time, always gurgling at me. It was almost a hungry feeling but I wasn't hungry, although food made me feel better. I had to stop taking it off and on and eventually, unless I had stopped taking it for a couple of weeks, it wouldn't produce a BM.

JR Comment: *This lady was using Magnesium as a laxative; a wrong usage in my opinion. It stopped working. Vit C, unless its ascorbic acid powder, is very acidic, no wonder, "felt sour "*

Case 3. I was diagnosed with IBS-C in my forties but I've had proctalgia fugax since I was 23, off and on. ...Since I started taking magnesium, off and on, I don't have a problem. Once I stopped taking it and I got the constipation with the symptoms of tugging, low back ache. I started taking magnesium as recommended and within 48 hours it was completely gone. I am so happy about it. Magnesium regulates muscle function and that applies to intestinal muscles too.

JR comment: *Keywords here are off & off; Magnesium should not be taken all the time.*

Case 4. I take magnesium whenever I need to relieve constipation. I tend to get constipated when I eat highly refined foods such as white rice, white-floured breads like that of pizza dough, and even pasta. Whenever I eat these challenging foods, they tend to back me up for up to as many as three days with extremely hard bowel movements or no movements at all. And because I continue to eat regularly

each day, I will begin to bloat.

In the past I had used OTC laxatives that caused my heart to palpitate within a couple of hours of use. The magnesium that I have been using gives me no side effects whatsoever. I have also noticed that after one day of recommended use, my body will continue to expel most of the waste over a 12-hour period and I will return to regularity and remain regular without the need of more magnesium. This is really good stuff.

I have to admit; when I relieve my constipation with magnesium I might have a gas problem, not always, maybe 30 percent of the time. So to solve this problem, I eat all-natural yogurts or Kefir. After I eat a couple of servings for one or two days, my gas problem goes away and I have fully functioning bowels without issues.

JR comment: This is a great usage of Magnesium – to restore regularity, without encouraging dependence. The gas issue, after cleansing colon, is due to residual debris, and reactivation of bowel functioning. That's why we are so insistent that good quality oral probiotics be taken post-colonic.

Yoghurt/ kefir, if fresh, is ok. See the WLC info piece on probiotics.

Case 5. I have suffered from a lazy bowel all my life. This has caused me to have an overgrowth of bacteria in my gut. Three years ago I had a colonoscopy and received a diagnosis of IBS, yet the doctor did not recommend taking any sort of supplements for my constipation. I recently started taking 1200mg of magnesium oxide (which I now realize is too much for me since it gave me loose stools, so I will reduce the dosage) and I am pleased to finally find a product that works without having to take harsh laxatives.

JR comments: key point here is the need to adjust dosage. Loose stools –if chronic- points to intestinal hurry. Not advisable.

Case 6. I was told by a doctor that taking 1000mg of magnesium supplements each day could help my severe IBS-C. I tried it since I'm so desperate (I'm lucky if I have one BM every month) and got horrible cramps. I did research online and found out that high doses of magnesium might cause side effects like nausea, cramps, vomiting, fatigue. I then lowered my intake to 250mg since 350mg, or less, is apparently OK for most people. I noticed the cramps went away but I still have severe IBS constipation so it didn't help.

JR comments: It's unsurprising this person had cramps. One BM/ month, or less! They were bound to get reactions, not having approached the presenting condition respectfully. Hydration would have been important, then gentle colonics, just to hydrate the colon and loosen the stool, and only then magnesium. Colonics needed to be the mainstay approach. More than likely, the outcome would have been different. (Of course, no one can know for certain. This is just my opinion).

Case 7. I have just started taking one 250mg magnesium tablet every night before I go to bed, and this has helped my IBS constipation problem about 100%. I am in my 60's, and I have suffered with constipation for at least the last 15 years. I had two colonoscopies and nothing was found except the IBS. I only need the 250mg and just once a day. I feel that these pills are a miracle happening! I had tried fiber, laxatives, and had to keep enemas close at hand, but not anymore. Thank you magnesium!

JR comments: An example of suiting the dosage to the person. One size does not fit all.

Case 8. I was diagnosed with IBS-C approximately three years ago. Before then I had occasional constipation (like once a year) but then suddenly I was constipated almost every other day and could not find relief without taking a painful enema or suppository. My doctor kept recommending things like milk of magnesia, mineral oil, and a bunch of other laxatives that didn't work.

After months of suffering I discovered magnesium oxide. I was doubtful about it, but it worked - and in just four hours too. Unfortunately though at least once a week I will get constipated and the magnesium relieves me, but when I go it is diarrhea. I've just started taking magnesium citrate pills to see if they will help me stay regular so that I won't have to have diarrhea.

JR comment: This persons comment does not reveal an ideal outturn from using magnesium. It's almost mimicking the alternate phase of IBS (ie alternating constipation/ diarrhea). Intestinal sluggishness and its counterpart, intestinal hurry. More investigation required.

Case 9. I began taking magnesium oxide for my constipation-predominant IBS, and so far, so good. My doctor recommended I start with 750mg (three 250mg pills) twice a day - which was too much (diarrhea). I cut back to 750mg once a day, at bedtime. This seems to be the right dosage for me. I have been going almost every day since I began the supplements. I feel so much better.

I've been suffering from IBS for the past year or so, and regularly go five to seven days with no relief, at which time I'll have to take a laxative - which I hate doing. I am cautiously hopeful that the MagOx will continue to work so that I can live my life without the stress and discomfort of my IBS symptoms.

I also have an Activia yogurt and a cup of coffee every morning...I think this routine may be helpful in conjunction with the MagOx, but it doesn't do much on its own.

Update case nr 9

I last reviewed magnesium oxide in October 2007, at which time I'd been taking it for about a week and a half in order to treat my IBS. It's now May 2008 and I am relieved to report that the magnesium is still working for me. It has changed my life. I will keep hoping/praying that it continues to help, indefinitely. I now take four 250mg tablets once a day, at bedtime.

JR comment: In my view, not a good sign that dosage has increased; on the other hand, reasonably modestly (and still less than doctors prescribed amount). Personally, I wouldn't recommend Activia (sugar content) or coffee. Better would be good quality probiotics and colonics.

Case 10. I have had IBS-C for over two years nowfor the past few weeks I've been taking the magnesium supplement MagOx (magnesium oxide), in conjunction with the probiotic Theralac, and I feel fantastic!

I take two of the MagOx caplets every day and I have been completely pain, cramps and constipation free. Too much magnesium at first can cause diarrhea and bloating, so it's important to gradually increase the dosage, if needed. Of course, I still have a modified diet, but I do not feel at all deprived. I can have a little dairy and fried food here and there, without any major problems. I honestly feel like I have my life back.

JR comment: It sounds like for this woman there was a magnesium deficiency, which would explain the dramatic benefit. Dosage not stated, but probably 500 mg/ days, which is ok.

Case 11. I've been an IBS sufferer for approximately 19 years now, some years better than others. I've found that if I take two 300mg magnesium capsules at night I can comfortably go to the toilet after breakfast at around 8.30am the next morning - completely and totally clean as a whistle, without any further problems during the day. I find the key is to always start the day with an 'empty bowel'. I've learnt that some foods, ie: dairy products, especially cheese, can gum me up, but if I take my capsules each night then I will be fine in the morning.

JR comments: Magnesium seems to work best overnight. (Ie on empty stomach, and also during body's' detox period)

Case 12. I have found that magnesium oxide combined with vitamin C has helped my constipation. I have been an IBS sufferer for over six years, with severe bouts of constipation (lasting five to 10 days straight), and laxatives were too harsh or ineffective. I also drink plenty of water to aid in digestion and motility. It's a Godsend!

JR comments: Hydration is crucial; Magnesium is an osmotic, meaning it draws water (into the stools). There needs to be enough water to go around.

JR Key points from analysing reviews

- a) Take magnesium before bed on empty stomach
- b) Do not get habituated; it isn't to be used as a laxative.
- c) On/ off periods of usage, in combo with colonics is best.
- d) Probiotics use is important (repopulate gut with good bacteria).
- e) Maintain excellent level of hydration: magnesium is an osmotic. It will dehydrate the body in absence of sufficient water.
- f) Not all magnesium supplements are created equal.

Context for this paper

Note: Julia Rhodes is not medically qualified. She is a trained colon hydro therapist (and non practicing physiotherapist). Nothing in this paper is to be taken as medical or clinical advice. It only represents Julia's views from a holistic, non-medical perspective.

No assertion is made that Julia's opinions (a desktop not field review) are shared by the individuals who reported on their experience. Indeed, there has been no contact with those individuals.