

# Small Intestine Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO)

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## What is Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO)?

Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO) is defined as the presence of excessive bacteria in the small intestine. Typically, the small intestine contains low levels of bacteria, unlike the large intestine which has a diverse ecosystem.

A common misconception is that SIBO affects only a limited number of people, such as those with an anatomic abnormality of the upper gastrointestinal (GI) tract or those with a motility disorder. However, SIBO may be more prevalent than previously thought.

## How is SIBO diagnosed?

The most common way to diagnose SIBO is by undergoing a Hydrogen breath test. This is a test for bacterial overgrowth using glucose. **Glucose** is a sugar that will be broken down by bacteria (if present) in the small bowel. The breakdown of glucose releases hydrogen or methane gas. The breath sample will be analyzed for hydrogen or methane content to determine if you are able to properly break down the glucose or if you have bacterial overgrowth. If you are not able to break down the glucose, then your breath test is positive and you have SIBO.

## What are the symptoms of SIBO?

- Chronic diarrhea
- Bloating
- Abdominal swelling
- Gas and belching
- Abdominal pain or fullness after eating

- Alteration of bowel habits (constipation, diarrhea or alternating with both)  
You may have one or all of these symptoms.

## **What is the treatment?**

**SIBO** is typically treated with a short course of antibiotics that help the bacteria go to their normal location.

**SIBO** can reoccur following treatment. Recurrence may be as high as 10 out of 100 people (10%) in 3 months, 25-30 out of 100 people (25-30%) in 6 months, and 40-45 out of 100 people (40-45%) in 9 months. This may require retreatment with antibiotics.

If you are scheduled for a Hydrogen breath test you should review the Hydrogen Breath Test teaching sheet here before your test for the prep instructions: [http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/MPU/Hydrogen\\_Breath\\_Test.pdf](http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/MPU/Hydrogen_Breath_Test.pdf)

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