General Approach to Getting Started:

1. Do a gastrointestinal cleanse (multiple methods recommended both natural or using medications). My suggestion is do what you are comfortable with, I don’t advocate one approach over another but do recommend you consult with a physician if you have any cardiac, renal, electrolyte, respiratory or other medical conditions that might be effected by a cleanse.

2. After GI cleanse – start on a GI probiotic (there are numerous ones in the community but you should be looking for ones that are specific for the GI tract and have at least 10 billion CFU of bacteria. Also, make sure it is a reputable brand that would be safe for you or your child.

3. Immediately start on a plant-based diet made of whole foods, that aren’t processed, with lean healthy meats, limited dairy intake to small amounts or completely eliminated (greek yogurt or hard cheeses, and not lactose containing products). Make sure the diet has a variety of plants/fruits, and if unable to do, then take a daily multivitamin. The diet approach doesn’t have to be 100% but you should be shooting for 80% of what you eat. Avoid corn syrups, hydrogenated oils, margarine, or soy in your diet. Avoid processed sugar, using only natural sugars such as honey. Avoid sugar substitutes such as sorbitol.

4. Stress reduction techniques should be started immediately
   a. Journal every night – symptoms, diet, stools, emotions, stressors
   b. Develop goals and priority lists
   c. Say ‘No’ if it doesn’t contribute to your goals or priorities
   d. Distance self from toxic, negative people in your life, toxic activities or stressful situations or activities.
   e. Reduce social media use and constant need to check phone.
   f. Avoid impulsive decisions
   g. Manage finances by putting aside 20% of income or allowances into a savings account.
   h. Perform mindfulness activities at least 3 times per day such as mindful eating, walking, sitting, listening to sounds or drawing. Download an app on your phone to help you (i.e., insight timer, Headspace, calm, etc).

5. Exercise daily for 60 minutes (includes walking, yoga or any other activity that you enjoy). Doesn’t need to be in a gym, group classes are recommended.

6. Have a good sleep hygiene shooting for at least 8 hours per day. Avoid having phone next to you in bed. Have a bedtime routine. Sleep with no lights in order to encourage maximum melatonin release. Avoid using sleep aids. Try not to have sleepless nights alternating with excessive sleep days. Try to use your natural circadian rhythm.

Get Educated:

- Need to understand the role of stress, diet and sleep in the development of abdominal pain and gastrointestinal symptoms. Your gut is trying to tell you something, stop and listen to it.
- Journal stressors, diet, stooling patterns, pain, emotions and other symptoms every day to see if can identify triggers or to assess response to treatment/coping strategies.
- Meditation (using an app like Headspace, insight timer, etc),
- Use healthy distraction techniques (such as art, music, lavender stick or aromatherapy necklace, etc).
- Avoid vegetative distraction techniques (such as TV, movies, videogames).
- Learn to express self with writing/journaling, drawing, music, art, dance and talk-therapy.
- Make sure school or work provides accommodations or has a space for you when pain is occurring, including a safe space to practice coping strategies.

Get Counseling, Alternative and Mindfulness Therapy:

- Psychotherapy (cognitive behavioral therapy) or counseling at school may be helpful.
- Consider self-hypnosis or hypnotherapy.
- Consider massage, chiropractic, osteopathic, acupuncture to help relieve tension in stressed body parts.
- Consider aromatherapy such as using lavender oil (wear aromatherapy necklace, wrist band and have a aroma vaporizer in your room).
- Consider music therapy or art therapy
- Mindful walking should be practiced for at least 5 minutes 3 times per day.
- Consider mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) course
• If religiously inclined, start with dairy prayers, meditation and holy book reading.
• Download an application to help you with meditation or mindfulness such as Headspace, Calm, Breathe, Relax, etc.

**Diet:**

• Limit dairy to greek yogurt and hard cheeses, limit processed food, excessive fiber/raw foods, and simple sugars, Eliminate sugar substitutes, soy, hydrogenated oils or excessive animal fat, greasy foods, fast foods and canned foods. Goal is to shoot for 80% of the time to eat this diet without stressing at other times that you enjoyed a meal with friends or family that might not have been completely ideal (i.e., going out for a pizza or ice cream).
• Wholesome food diet is based on principle food comes from the ground, with no pesticides, genetic manipulation or excessive processing.
• Trial of Low-FODMAP diet for IBS symptoms, abdominal pain, gas, or chronic intermittent diarrhea.
• Trial of Gastroparesis diet for bloating, early satiety, chronic nausea, vomiting or reflux.
• Meals should be eat in courses on small plates, as a group/family with no distractions such as TV and phones, with focus on a healthy breakfast and lunch rich in protein and a smaller dinner.
• Mindful eating of food should be practiced should be practiced for at least 5 minutes with each meal.

**Supplements/Medications:**

• For IBS: Consider peppermint oil such as IBgard ([ibgard.com](http://ibgard.com))
• For Dyspepsia: Consider peppermint oil products such as FDbgard ([fdgard.com](http://fdgard.com))
• Levsin or Bentyl (prescribed by your provider) as needed from crampy abdominal pain (avoid if constipated)
• Treatment of constipation with Miralax and senna including use of cleanout when severely constipated and keeping stools daily and “pudding” soft.
• Trial of probiotics for 30 days (Culturelle, Align, or Biogaia) after completing a cleanout
• Trial of Zofran (prescribed by provider) as needed for nausea/vomiting
• Trial of cyproheptadine (prescribed by provider) at bedtime to relieve pain and morning nausea. May try Benadryl at bedtime if unable to get prescription in time.
• omeprazole (Prilosec) 20-40 mg in morning before breakfast for 2-4 weeks to see if heartburn and/or epigastric pain, otherwise to use ranitidine (Zantac) as needed for heartburn/reflux symptoms.
• If not improving, would consider trial of SSRI (i.e, Zoloft, Prozac) or amitriptyline (Elavil) for older children and young adults, but should be monitored closely by provider.

**RED FLAGS:**

• Go to Emergency Department or call your physician (if severe or concerned that it is acute or different): worsening abdominal pain, persistent emesis, lethargy, heartburn, dysphagia, worsening diarrhea, bloody stools, unexplained weight loss or poor weight gain, unexplained joint complaints, unexplained rashes, unexplained fevers, chills, sweats, mouth sores/ulcers or perianal changes such as multiple anal tags, fissures that are not healing, nighttime stooping, worsening stool urgency/frequency/pain with defecation

**Additional Resources:**

• IFFGD.org
  - aboutIBS.org
  - aboutConstipation.org
  - aboutGERD.org
  - aboutGastroparesis.org
  - aboutgiMotility.org
  - aboutKidsGI.org
• GIkids.org
• Low-FODMAP Diet [https://www.monashfodmap.com/](https://www.monashfodmap.com/) or [http://www.fodmapliving.com](http://www.fodmapliving.com)
• Gastroparesis Diet [http://gastroparesisclinic.org](http://gastroparesisclinic.org) or [http://www.digestivedistress.com](http://www.digestivedistress.com)
• Thededarcenter.com (consciousgut.com)

**Articles:**

• The tantalizing links between gut microbes and the brain, Nature 2015
• Think Twice: How the Gut's “Second Brain” Influences Mood and Well-Being, Scientific American 2010

Books:
• Evolve Your Brain by Dr. Joe Dispenza
• **The Mind-Gut Connection by Dr. Emeran Mayer**
• Take Control of Your IBS by Dr. Peter Whorwell
• Understanding the Irritable Gut: The Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders by Dr. W. Grant Thompson
• The Gut Solution: For Parents with Children Who Have Recurrent Abdominal Pain and Irritable Bowel Syndrome by Drs. Michael Lawson and Jessica Del Pozo.
• The Placebo Effect and Health: Combining Science and Compassionate Care by Dr. W. Grant Thompson
• You are the placebo: making your mind matter by Dr. Joe Dispenza
• The China Study: The Most Comprehensive Study of Nutrition Ever Conducted and the Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss, and Long-Term Health by Dr. T. Colin Campbell and Thomas M. Campbell II.
• **Forks Over Knives: The Plant-Based Way to Healthy by Dr. T. Colin Campbell**
• Whole: Rethinking the Science of Nutrition by Drs. T. Colin Campbell and Don Hagen
• The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan and Scott Brick
• **In Defense of Food by Michael Pollan and Scott Brick**
• Meditation Made Easy: Coming to Know Your Mind by Matteo Pistono
• Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness by John Kabat-Zinn and Thich Nhat Hanh.
• **Wherever You go, There You Are; Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life by Jon Kabat-Zinn**
• The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation by Thich Nhat Hanh, Vo-Dihn Mai, Mobi Ho.
• Mindful Eating: A Guide to Rediscovering a Healthy and Joyful Relationship with Food by Jan Chozen Bays
• The Brain Maker: The Power of Gut Microbes to Heal and Protect Your Brain for Life by Dr. David Perlmutter and Kristin Loberg