



PATIENT HANDOUT

The IBD Trigger Tracker

A structured way to find out what could be making your symptoms worse

Vance Medical Ltd provides general information and community support for people affected by gastrointestinal conditions. It is not medical advice and is not a substitute for the care of your own healthcare team. Nothing on this site should be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Always speak to your GP, pharmacist, dietitian or other qualified healthcare professional before making changes to your diet, medication or treatment, and with any questions about a medical condition. If you think you may have a medical emergency, call 999 or NHS 111 straight away.

The IBD Trigger Tracker

A structured way to find out what could be making your symptoms worse

Food, stress, sleep, medicines, infections and other factors can sometimes coincide with changes in symptoms. Tracking them can help you spot patterns worth discussing with your IBD team, but it cannot show whether something caused inflammation or a flare, and it works best written down next to what actually happened, not remembered afterwards.

FOUR CATEGORIES

What to Track

Category	Why it matters
Food & drink	The most commonly suspected trigger, and the easiest to test one item at a time.[1]
Stress & sleep	Both are independently linked to symptom flares in IBD, not just "in your head." [2][3]
Medication	Missed doses, timing, and any new NSAID or antibiotic course all matter.
Other	Infections, travel and menstrual cycle all get mentioned often enough to be worth a note.

You don't need to log everything perfectly: a rushed one-line note beats a perfect entry you never finish. Consistency over a few weeks matters far more than detail on any single day.

FILL THIS IN AS YOU GO

The Weekly Log

Day	Symptoms (0-10) & bowel pattern	Food / drink notes	Stress, sleep, meds, other
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			

Day	Symptoms (0-10) & bowel pattern	Food / drink notes	Stress, sleep, meds, other
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Sun

Photocopy this page, print another, or use the Health Record on VanceHealthHub to keep the same four columns in one private digital place instead.

AFTER A FEW WEEKS

Reading the Pattern

- Look for repeated patterns rather than assuming one episode proves a trigger
- Compare good weeks to bad weeks side by side, not just bad days in isolation
- A trigger doesn't have to act the same day: some patterns show up 24-48 hours later
- If nothing repeats after a few weeks, that's useful too: it points away from a single trigger and toward discussing the pattern with your team

DON'T SELF-DIAGNOSE FROM IT

When to Bring It to Your Team

This is a starting point, not a diagnosis

A tracker tells you what's worth asking about; it can't tell you whether something is a genuine trigger, a coincidence, or a sign of something else entirely. Bring the pattern to your IBD team or dietitian rather than acting on it alone, especially before cutting out foods or medication.

GO FURTHER

More Support From VanceHealthHub

- **Health Record:** log symptoms, bowel pattern and dates in one private place
- **The Practical Food Guide for Crohn's & Colitis:** trigger foods in more depth, and when to see a dietitian
- **Malnutrition Calculator:** track unintentional weight change to raise with a dietitian or GP
- **VANCE-Ai:** a starting point for questions between appointments, not a substitute for your care team

None of these replace your GP, gastroenterologist or dietitian, and nothing on VanceHealthHub should be used to diagnose or treat a condition.

THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND IT

References

Crohn's & Colitis UK · Guts UK

1. Crohn's & Colitis UK. Food and IBD, 2023.
2. Bernstein CN. Psychological Stress and Depression: Risk Factors for IBD? Dig Dis, 2016;34(1-2):58-63.
3. Ali T, et al. Sleep, immunity and inflammation in gastrointestinal disorders. World J Gastroenterol, 2013;19(48):9231-9239.
4. Bischoff SC, et al. ESPEN guideline on Clinical Nutrition in inflammatory bowel disease. Clin Nutr, 2023;42(3):352-379.

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