

Abdominal discomfort

Advising and supporting customers

Learning outcomes

After reading this, you will:

Be able to help your customers to manage their symptoms



Understand what impact the gut microbiome may have on symptoms



Know when to refer for an IBS diagnosis or to the GP

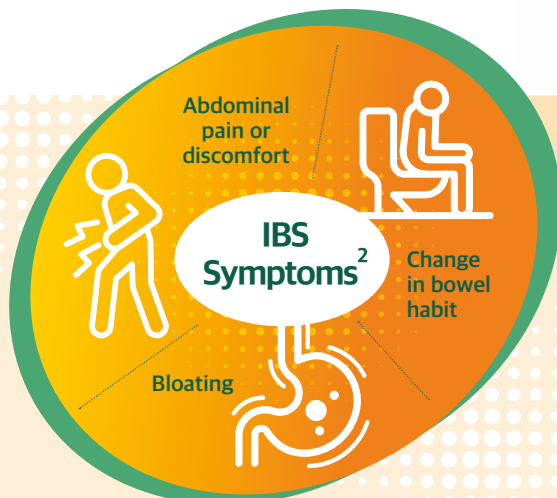


Some customers suffering from abdominal pain and cramps might be using products such as antacids or painkillers to manage their condition. These may help with excess acid or general pain, but don't treat the source of the problem. This training will help you understand more about abdominal pain and the advice and products you can recommend to customers.

Causes and symptoms

Common causes of abdominal discomfort include trapped wind, indigestion, constipation and diarrhoea, which can cause symptoms such as bloating, feeling sick and changes to bowel movements.¹ Where cramps, bloating, diarrhoea and constipation persist, the customer could be affected by irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and should see their GP for a diagnosis.

They may find that they have days when symptoms are manageable, and on other days they may get flare-ups caused by stress, or particular food/drinks.²



The gut microbiome

There has been a lot of interest in the gut microbiome and how the diverse population of bacteria may contribute to health, bowel movement and stool consistency as the gut microbiome is thought to have many protective functions.^{3,4} Food supplements and fermented foods contain a range of microbial species. These may contribute to a healthy gut environment.⁵

Antispasmodics act on the smooth muscles in the gut. Examples include hyoscine butylbromide, which is an antimuscarinic (reduces muscle contractions), and peppermint oil (a smooth muscle relaxant). They act to relieve symptoms (such as bloating, spasm and abdominal pain) and to reduce the motility of the gut.⁶ Customers may also be interested in food supplements for daily digestive support.

Managing abdominal discomfort

Buscomint Peppermint Oil 0.2ml gastro-resistant capsule, soft (GSL)



Peppermint oil 0.2ml

Herbal medicinal product for the symptomatic 3-in-1 relief of abdominal pain, minor spasms and flatulence.

Suitable for:

Adults and children over 12 years of age (who weigh over 40kg). Not suitable for pregnant or breastfeeding women.

Dose:

One capsule three times a day. Swallow whole, do not chew, crush or break before swallowing. Take 30 minutes before a meal with plenty of fluid.

Benefits:⁷

- Multi-symptom relief in abdominal discomfort, especially in IBS
- Effective relief of abdominal pain and cramps, bloating and flatulence
- Targets the source of abdominal pain
- For symptomatic treatment for up to two weeks
- Can be taken for up to three months for persistent symptoms with the advice of a medical professional
- Well tolerated.

IBS and cramps relief

Buscopan IBS Relief (GSL) and Buscopan Cramps (P)



Hyoscine butylbromide

Buscopan IBS Relief provides relief of muscle spasm associated with medically confirmed IBS.

Buscopan Cramps can ease the symptoms of abdominal cramps, such as pain and discomfort caused by stress, certain foods or IBS.

Unlike analgesics, hyoscine butylbromide acts directly on the gut muscle spasms and very little is absorbed into the bloodstream.

It helps the gut muscles to relax, which relieves pain, and can allow the digestive process to return to normal.

Benefits:^{8,9}

- Targets the source of the pain
- Fast acting - starts to work in 15 minutes¹⁰
- Gentle on the stomach
- Well tolerated
- Can be taken at the first sign of a flare-up as needed
- Simple and flexible dosage regimen.

Note: Customers could take Buscomint as well as Buscopan IBS Relief to manage their IBS, as they act differently to relieve cramps.¹¹

Supporting daily digestive health

Buscobiota is a food supplement for daily digestive support.*



Contains:

- A unique blend of scientifically studied strains of bacteria: three types of *Lactobacillus* and two types of *Bifidobacterium*
- *Lactobacillus Rhamnosus* R11 to support bacteria levels in the gut
- Calcium to support the normal digestive processes

Dose:

One capsule daily, at the start of a meal, with water¹²

Advice:

- Doesn't need to be kept in the fridge¹²
- Can be taken as part of a holistic approach to support daily digestive processes, thanks to calcium, along with a healthy, balanced diet and active lifestyle.

*Contains calcium which contributes to the normal function of digestive enzymes.

Diet and lifestyle tips

Those suffering from abdominal cramps and IBS may be able to manage their symptoms by making adjustments to their lifestyle, such as:¹³

Keeping a food diary may help the customer to identify which trigger foods to avoid (such as fatty, spicy foods, fizzy/caffeinated drinks and foods that are difficult to digest like onions or dried fruit)



Limiting intake of high-fibre wholegrains if affected by diarrhoea



Avoiding processed food, sorbitol and ready meals, and instead eating home-cooked meals made with fresh ingredients



Eating oats or linseeds, which may help with cramping or bloating



Eating no more than three pieces of fresh fruit a day as fructose can sometimes trigger symptoms



Taking regular exercise



Finding time to relax, as stress can exacerbate symptoms



Trying probiotics for a month to see if they help. *Bifidobacterium* or *Lactobacillus* species have been found to reach the large bowel when eaten.¹⁴



When to refer:^{1,2,6}

Note that customers who have tried products that are not helping, or who have symptoms that persist despite treatment and dietary changes, should speak to their GP. Customers who find they need to avoid a lot of different foods may benefit from speaking to a dietitian. Customers experiencing any of the following should also be referred:



Unintentional weight loss



Blood in the stools or from the vagina or back passage



Intense pain



Problems urinating



Problems swallowing



A hard lump/swelling in the stomach



Shortness of breath, pale skin or palpitations.

Further training:

For further training about the Busco range of products visit

www.pharmacymagazine.co.uk/busco-learning



REFERENCES: 1. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stomach-ache/> 2. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/symptoms/> 3. Mills S, Stanton C, Lane JA, Smith GJ, Ross RP. Precision Nutrition and the Microbiome, Part 1: Current state of the science. *Nutrients* 2019;11(4):923. Published 2019 Apr 24. Doi:10.3390/nu11040923 Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6520976/> 4. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278033614_Stool_consistency_is_strongly_associated_with_gut_microbiota_richness_and_composition_enterotypes_and_bacterial_growth_rates 5. <https://www.bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/gut-health-probiotics> 6. <https://patient.info/digestive-health/irritable-bowel-syndrome-leaflet/antispasmodic-medicines> 7. Buscomint SmPC: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/1139> 8. Buscopan IBS Relief SmPC: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/3884> 9. Buscopan Cramps SmPC: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/891> 10. Lacy et al. *Scandinavian Journal of Gastroenterology*, 2013; 48: 926-935 11. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1360402/#ref5> 12. Buscobioti core labelling document 13. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/diet-lifestyle-and-medicines/> 14. <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/nutritionscience/foodfacts/functional-foods.html?start=4>

Online references last accessed March 2021.

PRODUCT INFORMATION:

Buscopan® Peppermint oil 0.2 ml gastro-resistant capsules

Presentation: Capsules containing 0.2 ml of peppermint oil. **Indications:** Herbal medicinal product for the symptomatic relief of abdominal pain, minor spasms of the gastrointestinal tract and flatulence, especially in patients with irritable bowel syndrome. **Dosage and administration:** Adults and children over 12 years (who weigh at least 40 kg): one capsule three times a day. Take capsules 30 minutes before a meal with plenty of liquid. Take Buscopan until symptoms resolve, usually within one or two weeks. After two weeks, seek medical advice in case of persistent or deteriorating symptoms. When the symptoms are more persistent, the capsules can be taken for periods up to 3 months per treatment course. **Contraindications:** Hypersensitivity to menthol or any of the ingredients, patients with liver disease, cholangitis, achlorhydria, gallstones and other biliary disorders, children under 12 years of age and patients with a body weight less than 40 kg. **Warnings and precautions:** Swallow the capsules whole to avoid release of the peppermint oil prematurely, which may cause local irritation of the mouth and oesophagus. Patients who suffer from heartburn or hiatus hernia may have exacerbation of these symptoms after taking peppermint oil; treatment should be discontinued in these patients. In case unexplained abdominal pain persists or worsens, or occurs together with symptoms like fever, jaundice, vomiting, changes in bowel movement frequency, or blood in stool medical advice should be sought immediately. Contains less than 1 mmol sodium (23 mg) per capsule. **Interactions:** Food or antacids administered at the same time may cause early release of the capsule contents. Medicines used to decrease stomach acid, like histamine-2 blockers and proton pump inhibitors, may cause premature dissolution of the enteric coating and should be avoided. **Pregnancy and lactation:** Pregnancy: There are no or limited amount of data from the use of peppermint oil in pregnant women. In the absence of sufficient data, the use during pregnancy is not recommended. Lactation: Clinical data have shown that 1,8-cineol, one constituent of peppermint oil, can be excreted into human breast milk. Buscopan is therefore not recommended during lactation. **Side effects:** Unknown frequency: anaphylactic shock due to allergic reaction to menthol, muscle tremor, ataxia, headache, blurred vision, bradycardia, heartburn, perianal burning, nausea, vomiting, faeces with abnormal menthol smell, inflammation of the glands of the penis, erythematous skin rash, urticarial or obstructive ileus, megacolon, narrow angle glaucoma, known hypersensitivity to any component. **Warnings and precautions:** Should not be taken for extended periods without investigating the cause of abdominal pain. Use with caution in conditions characterised by tachycardia; those susceptible to intestinal or urinary outlet obstruction; pyrexia. Warn patients to seek medical advice if they develop a painful red eye with loss of vision. Not to be taken by patients with rare hereditary problems of fructose intolerance, glucose-galactose malabsorption or sucrose-isomaltase insufficiency as the tablet coat contains sucrose. Advise patients to consult their doctor before taking if: age over 40 years and some time since the last attack of IBS or the symptoms are different; recent rectal bleeding; severe constipation; nausea or vomiting; loss of appetite or weight; difficulty or pain passing urine; fever; recent travel abroad, looking pale and feeling tired, abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge. Advise patients to consult their doctor if they develop new symptoms, or if symptoms worsen, or if they do not improve after 2 weeks of treatment. **Interactions:** The anticholinergic effect of drugs, e.g. tri- and tetracyclic antidepressants, antihistamines, quinidine, amantadine, antipsychotics (e.g. butyrophenones, phenothiazines), disopyramide and other anticholinergics (e.g. tiotropium, ipratropium, atropine-like compounds) may be intensified. Co-administration with a dopamine antagonist may diminish the effect of both medicines. The tachycardic effects of beta-adrenergic agents may be enhanced. **Pregnancy & lactation:** Use during pregnancy and breastfeeding is not recommended. **Side effects:** Uncommon: dry mouth, tachycardia, skin reactions (e.g. urticaria, pruritus), abnormal sweating. Rare: urinary retention. Not known: anaphylactic shock, anaphylactic reactions, dyspnoea, rash, erythema, other hypersensitivity. **RRP (ex VAT):** Buscopan IBS Relief: 8 tablets £2.08, 20 tablets £4.16, 40 tablets £6.95. Buscopan Cramps: 20 tablets £4.16. **Legal category:** Buscopan IBS Relief: GSL. Buscopan Cramps: P. **Product licence numbers:** Buscopan IBS Relief: PL 04425/0711. Buscopan Cramps: PL 04425/0709. **Product licence holder:** Sanofi, 410 Thames Valley Park Drive, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1PT, UK. Further information is available from Sanofi, 410 Thames Valley Park Drive, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1PT. Email: uk-medicalinformation@sanofi.com **Date of preparation:** June 2020.

Buscopan® IBS Relief & Buscopan® Cramps

Presentation: tablets containing hyoscine butylbromide 10 mg. **Indications:** Buscopan IBS Relief: Relief of gastro-intestinal tract spasm associated with medically confirmed Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Buscopan Cramps: For the relief of spasms of the genito-urinary tract or gastro-intestinal tract and for the symptomatic relief of Irritable Bowel Syndrome. **Dose and administration:** For Irritable Bowel Syndrome: adults: initially 1 tablet three times daily, increasing if necessary, to 2 tablets four times a day. For spasms of the genito-urinary or gastro-intestinal tract: adults: 2 tablets four times daily, children 6-12 years: 1 tablet three times daily. **Contraindications:** Myasthenia gravis, mechanical stenosis in the gastrointestinal tract, paralytic or obstructive ileus, megacolon, narrow angle glaucoma, known hypersensitivity to any component. **Warnings and precautions:** Should not be taken for extended periods without investigating the cause of abdominal pain. Use with caution in conditions characterised by tachycardia; those susceptible to intestinal or urinary outlet obstruction; pyrexia. Warn patients to seek medical advice if they develop a painful red eye with loss of vision. Not to be taken by patients with rare hereditary problems of fructose intolerance, glucose-galactose malabsorption or sucrose-isomaltase insufficiency as the tablet coat contains sucrose. Advise patients to consult their doctor before taking if: age over 40 years and some time since the last attack of IBS or the symptoms are different; recent rectal bleeding; severe constipation; nausea or vomiting; loss of appetite or weight; difficulty or pain passing urine; fever; recent travel abroad, looking pale and feeling tired, abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge. Advise patients to consult their doctor if they develop new symptoms, or if symptoms worsen, or if they do not improve after 2 weeks of treatment. **Interactions:** The anticholinergic effect of drugs, e.g. tri- and tetracyclic antidepressants, antihistamines, quinidine, amantadine, antipsychotics (e.g. butyrophenones, phenothiazines), disopyramide and other anticholinergics (e.g. tiotropium, ipratropium, atropine-like compounds) may be intensified. Co-administration with a dopamine antagonist may diminish the effect of both medicines. The tachycardic effects of beta-adrenergic agents may be enhanced. **Pregnancy & lactation:** Use during pregnancy and breastfeeding is not recommended. **Side effects:** Uncommon: dry mouth, tachycardia, skin reactions (e.g. urticaria, pruritus), abnormal sweating. Rare: urinary retention. Not known: anaphylactic shock, anaphylactic reactions, dyspnoea, rash, erythema, other hypersensitivity. **RRP (ex VAT):** Buscopan IBS Relief: 8 tablets £2.08, 20 tablets £4.16, 40 tablets £6.95. Buscopan Cramps: 20 tablets £4.16. **Legal category:** Buscopan IBS Relief: GSL. Buscopan Cramps: P. **Product licence numbers:** Buscopan IBS Relief: PL 04425/0711. Buscopan Cramps: PL 04425/0709. **Product licence holder:** Sanofi, 410 Thames Valley Park Drive, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1PT, UK. Further information is available from Sanofi, 410 Thames Valley Park Drive, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1PT. Email: uk-medicalinformation@sanofi.com **Date of preparation:** December 2020

Adverse events should be reported. Reporting forms and information can be found at www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard or search for MHRA Yellow Card on the Google Play or Apple App Store. Adverse events should also be reported to Sanofi drug safety department on 0800 0902314