

IBS Life Context Route Card

Use this when gut symptoms are harder because of the life situation around them. It is not a diagnosis or emergency-care substitute.

1. Safety First

Get medical guidance promptly instead of self-routing if symptoms include:

- blood in stool, black/tarry stool, or rectal bleeding
- fever, fainting, severe weakness, or dehydration signs
- persistent vomiting or inability to keep fluids down
- severe, constant, worsening, or clearly different abdominal or pelvic pain
- pregnancy-related pain, heavy bleeding, blood-pressure symptoms, or new postpartum warning signs
- unexplained weight loss, anemia, nighttime diarrhea, or symptoms outside your baseline

2. Pick the Life Context

If the main situation is...	Best route
I am pregnant or postpartum and symptoms changed.	Pregnancy and postpartum gut symptom route
A teen needs bathroom access or school support.	Teen IBS school-day route
Symptoms changed around menopause or perimenopause.	Midlife symptom pattern map
Symptoms follow my menstrual cycle.	Cycle and gut symptom tracker
Pelvic pain, sex pain, or possible endometriosis is part of the pattern.	Pelvic-gut symptom conversation map
Work, school, commuting, or bathroom access is the barrier.	IBS away-from-home day plan
Shift work, sleep timing, or rotating meals changed the pattern.	Shift-work gut rhythm tracker

3. What Not To Do Next

- Do not assume every life-stage change is automatically IBS.
- Do not treat pregnancy, postpartum, pelvic pain, or abnormal bleeding as a routine diet problem.
- Do not make a teen prove symptoms publicly before support is offered.
- Do not solve work, school, or shift-work problems only with more restriction.
- Do not change food, supplements, caffeine, sleep, and schedule all at once.

4. One Useful Next Step

Choose one context and write one practical note:

- pregnancy/postpartum: timing, warning signs, medicines, hydration, and pelvic clues
- teen/school: bathroom access, meal timing, stress support, and missed-class impact
- menopause/perimenopause: bowel change, sleep, pelvic symptoms, and medicine shifts
- cycle: cycle day, stool pattern, pain location, bleeding, and pelvic clues
- pelvic pain: cycle timing, sex pain, urinary symptoms, bowel symptoms, and progression

- work/school/commute: bathroom map, commute buffer, food timing, caffeine, and backup plan
- shift work: sleep block, first meal, caffeine cutoff, hydration, stool pattern, and reflux

The goal is not to name the perfect diagnosis from the card. The goal is to choose the route that matches the situation before changing the plan.