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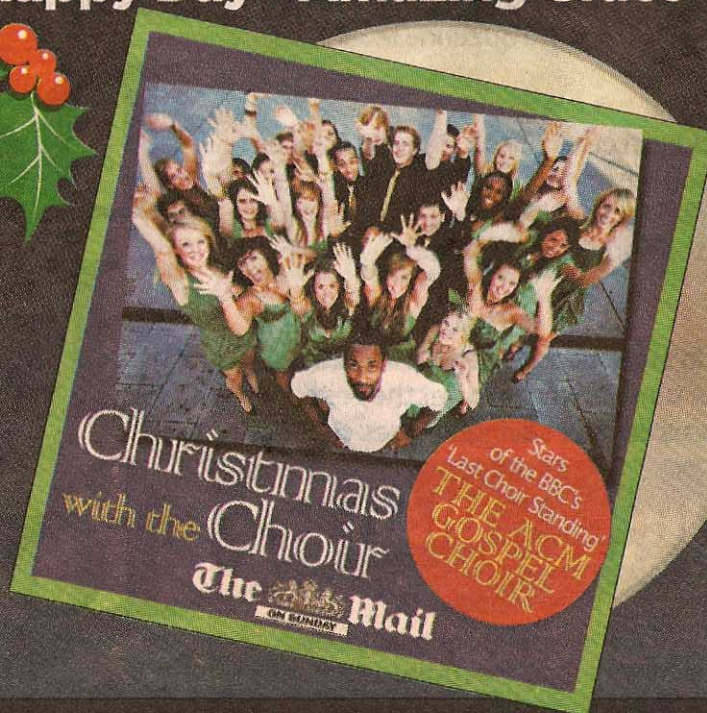
WEEKEND NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

**The stars of
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Christmas with the Choir



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OFFERS NOT AVAILABLE OUTSIDE THE UK

VACATION ON

Find a balance to change your life

People are normally very reluctant to talk about the symptoms of digestive discomfort, such as abdominal bloating, wind and painful bowel movements. Unfortunately for irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) sufferers, these are just a few of the often debilitating effects of the condition.

Statistics suggest that one in every 12 visits to the doctor is because of a digestive complaint – with IBS accounting for at least half of these. Although the symptoms are not life-threatening, they can significantly reduce quality of life.

IBS is a blanket term that describes an array of varying



symptoms. What many people don't realise is that their mood swings, fatigue, nausea, headaches and skin eruptions can often be a result of this condition.

Taking various over-the-counter medications can irritate the stomach lining, exacerbating the problem.

The key is to find out what is really behind the problem.

I am not a fan of practitioners diagnosing purely on the back of described symptoms, so when it comes to a compromised gut I often recommend a simple test provided by Smart Nutrition (www.smartnutrition.co.uk). It tests for levels of good and bad bacteria, candida and parasites.

In my experience, making changes to lifestyle such as getting more sleep, reducing stress levels and making dietary adjustments such as cutting out caffeine, alcohol, wheat and refined foods, unquestionably help.

But overall nutrition may not be the only way to control IBS symptoms. For me, balancing

the good and bad bacteria in the gut is also key.

A recent clinical study by Sheffield School of Medicine found that taking a specific high-strength probiotic supplement helped significantly. The eight-week study used a group of 48 IBS patients. Half were given BioCare's Bio-Acidophilus Forte daily probiotic supplement (www.biocare.co.uk), while the other half took a placebo. Those taking the supplement found symptoms improved, with reduced pain. A probiotic may well relieve your suffering, so it is worth a try.

● www.ibsnetwork.org.uk