

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (sometimes called spastic colon) is a disorder of the large intestine and is the most common gastrointestinal disorder. IBS usually affects women twice as often as it does men and usually begins in young adults. The exact cause of IBS is unknown, but it may result from a problem with the nerves in the bowels.

What are the symptoms?

- ▶ Diarrhea
- ▶ Constipation
- ▶ Gas or bloating
- ▶ Mucus in your stool
- ▶ Pain in your stomach that gets better after a bowel movement

What triggers symptoms?

The symptoms of IBS can be brought on by eating a big meal, stress, medications, or certain foods and drinks. In many people, caffeine and alcohol make the symptoms of IBS worse. Some women have symptoms of IBS during their period, or right before it begins.

How do I know if I have IBS?

Having an exam can help your doctor determine whether your symptoms are caused by IBS. Your doctor will ask you about your medical history and your bowel habits. You will likely have a physical exam, including a rectal exam. Your doctor may also run some tests.

How is IBS treated?

- ▶ **Diet** - Your doctor will help you tailor your diet to your needs. Your doctor may suggest that you cut out certain foods for a trial period and see how you are affected. It may be helpful to keep a daily diary of what you eat and your symptoms.
- ▶ **Stress** - Finding out what parts of your life cause you stress and learning how to control them is important in relieving IBS symptoms. Your doctor or a mental health professional can help you learn techniques to better manage stress.
- ▶ **Medicine** - There are medications that may help reduce the symptoms of IBS. Talk to your doctor for more information.

Does IBS get worse over time?

Although IBS is a chronic disorder with no cure, it can usually be controlled. IBS does not get worse over time, and it does not lead to any other disorders or diseases.

This information is general. If your doctor tells you something different, follow his or her instructions.

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