

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a disorder of the intestines that causes a change in bowel habits, abdominal pain, and bloating. In IBS, the intestines do not digest food properly. This causes food to move either too quickly or too slowly through the intestines. IBS affects about 20% of women and about 10% of men.

SIGNS and SYMPTOMS

- Abdominal Cramping
- Bloating and gas, especially after eating
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Feeling you need to have a bowel movement, right after having one
- Presence of mucous in the stool
- Symptoms that continue for more than 3 months

Bloody stools are not a sign of IBS. If you experience this, it is important to discuss with your doctor.

AGGRAVATORS

Several things can worsen the symptoms of IBS including:

- Stress
- Eating Big Meals
- Eating High-Fat Meals
- Menstrual Periods

Certain foods may make you feel worse. Try keeping a food diary and record when your symptoms worsen. Then, avoid the foods and triggers that make your symptoms worse.

TREATMENT

The main treatment option for IBS is a *change in lifestyle*.

- Reduce stress
- Eat a healthful, balanced diet that is high in fiber
- Increase fluids
- Avoid foods that worsen your symptoms
- Eat six small meals during the day, instead of three large meals

Your doctor may prescribe medicines to help decrease symptoms.

- Antispasmodic agents can help relieve intestinal spasm and abdominal pain
- Antidiarrheal agents such as Lomotil or Imodium help relieve diarrhea
- Antidepressants may be helpful in relieving diarrhea and pain

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Irritable Bowel Syndrome Association: <http://www.ibsassociation.org>

International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders: <http://www.iffgd.org>

This document was composed by a medical student for the purpose of patient education.

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