

## **Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)**

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common, chronic bowel disorder in which there is abdominal pain associated with change in consistency and frequency of stool. There are 3 different patterns of this disorder namely IBS- C (Constipation predominant) , IBS – D ( Diarrhoea predominant) and IBS – M ( Constipation + Diarrhoea). The same patient can have different patterns at different times

You may also experience abdominal bloating, mucus in the stool and the sensation of incomplete emptying after defecation. IBS is a chronic condition, although there may be times when the signs and symptoms are worse and times when they improve or even disappear completely. Similar symptoms can also occur in other serious bowel diseases especially if there is presence of blood in stool , weight loss, fever, loss of appetite and if the symptoms occur for the first time after the age of 50 years. If any of these are present then you must consult your doctor immediately.

IBS is a multifactorial disorder where there is interplay of intestinal hypersensitivity , psychological stress and gut bacteria . This leads to abnormal intestinal movements and associated symptoms.

Symptoms can be reduced by managing diet, lifestyle and stress. Certain drugs may be prescribed to alleviate your symptoms. Your doctor may advise certain laboratory investigations and colonoscopy to rule out a more serious disease. IBS is a chronic but not a life threatening disease and does not cause cancer.

### **Triggers vary from person to person**

Stimuli that don't bother other people can trigger symptoms in people with IBS — but not all people with the condition react to the same stimuli. Common triggers include:

**Foods:** The role of food allergy or intolerance in irritable bowel syndrome is not yet clearly understood, but many people have more severe symptoms when they eat certain things. A wide range of foods have been implicated — chocolate, spices, fats, fruits, beans, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, milk, carbonated beverages and alcohol to name a few.

**Stress:** Most people with IBS find that their signs and symptoms are worse or more frequent during periods of increased stress. While stress may contribute to symptoms It is not the sole cause.

**Hormones:** Researchers believe that hormonal changes play a role in this condition. Many women find that signs and symptoms are worse during or around their menstrual periods.

**Other illnesses:** Sometimes another illness, such as an acute episode of infectious diarrhea (gastroenteritis) or too many bacteria in the intestines (bacterial overgrowth), can trigger IBS.

## **Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)**

The diagnosis of IBS is essentially based on clinical evaluation. However your doctor may recommend certain tests including routine blood and stool tests. He may also advise examination of the large intestine by a colonoscopy.

Colonoscopy is a diagnostic test in which a miniature video camera in a flexible tube is used to examine the entire length of the colon after cleaning the bowel with certain laxative solutions. These tests are mostly advised in patients who have alarm symptoms like presence of blood in stool , weight loss, fever, loss of appetite and if the symptoms occur for the first time after the age of 50 years.

## **Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)**

In many cases, simple changes in your diet and lifestyle can provide relief from irritable bowel syndrome. Although your body may not respond immediately to these changes, your goal is to find long-term, not temporary, solutions:

- **Exercise regularly:** Exercise helps relieve depression and stress, stimulates normal contractions of your intestines, and can help you feel better about yourself. If you've been inactive, start slowly and gradually increase the amount of time you exercise. If you have other medical problems, check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- Drink adequate amount of water
- Make sure you eat regular and controlled meals as advised by your doctor/dietician.
- Stop smoking and tobacco use
- Avoid excessive coffee/caffeine and chewing gum.

- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption
- Use relaxation techniques: deep breathing, meditation, Yoga

### **Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)**

Diet plays an important role in the management of IBS.

**Add fiber in your diet** - It helps to reduce constipation. The best approach is to slowly increase the amount of fiber in your diet over a period of weeks. Examples of foods that contain fiber are whole grains, fruits, vegetables and beans. If your signs and symptoms remain the same or worse, tell your doctor.

However excessive fibre intake may increase bloating and gas in some patients.

**Avoid problem foods** – In case certain foods make your signs and symptoms worse, these may be avoided.

**Take care with dairy products**- If you're lactose intolerant, then milk and milk products need to be restricted.

#### **Foods to choose (Low FODMAP diet):**

Following foods reduces symptoms and improves quality of life.

**Fruits:** Bananas, muskmelon, grapes, kiwi, lemon, orange, pineapple, strawberries

**Vegetables:** Carrots, cabbage, broccoli, corn, cucumbers, green beans, pumpkin, potatoes, radishes, tomatoes

**Cereals and grains:** Biscuits, cereals, noodles, gluten-free breads and pastas, oats, corn, rice and other cereal products

**Meat, fish & poultry:** Chicken, lamb, pork, eggs & fish

**Milk alternatives:** Lactose-free milk and its products, rice or coconut milk, butter, yoghurt and nuts

**Beverages:** Water, fruit or vegetable juices, tea or coffee (limited amount)

#### **Foods to avoid (High FODMAP diet):**

**Fruits:** Apples, apricot, blackberries, canned fruit, dates, dried fruits, guava, grapefruit, papaya, mango, pears, plums, watermelon

**Vegetables:** Garlic, onion, cauliflower, peas, mushrooms

**Cereals and grains:** Barley, bran, muesli, rye, semolina, wheat

**High lactose dairy:** Milk, buttermilk, cream, ice-cream, cheese, custard

**Beverages:** Cold drinks, Coconut water, sodas, fennel tea, herbal tea

#### **How Common is IBS?**

IBS is widely prevalent. IBS is the most common disease diagnosed by gastroenterologists and one of the most common disorders seen by primary care physicians. It is estimated that 10 to 15 percent of the adult population suffers from IBS symptoms.

#### **How Does IBS Affect Patients' Lives?**

IBS can have a substantial impact on patients' lives. IBS symptoms can disrupt patients' daily lives causing them to miss school or work, reduce social activities and interactions, skip meals or make other changes to diet and nutrition. Symptoms can be reduced by managing diet, lifestyle and stress. Consultation with doctor and medication is important.

#### **Are There Different Types of IBS?**

Generally, doctors classify IBS based on the type of symptoms experienced by the patient. These include

By determining the type of IBS that you suffer from, doctors are able to determine the right treatment. So it's important for you to describe all of your symptoms to your doctors including your bowel habit and nature of the stool

#### **What Causes Bowel Symptoms in Irritable Bowel Syndrome?**

The exact cause of IBS is not clear. IBS is a multifactorial disorder where there is interplay of intestinal hypersensitivity, psychological stress and gut bacteria. This leads to abnormal intestinal movements and associated symptoms.

Infrequent, occasional constipation or diarrhea is not abnormal. Most people experience these symptoms from time to time. Diarrhea or constipation that is frequently

. . . . .