

IBS: Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Is it time to talk to your doctor?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) has become one of the most common disorders primary care physicians are seeing today. IBS is a disorder that interferes with the normal function of the large intestines (or colon).

Symptoms

The symptoms associated with IBS are thought to be related to the faulty communication between the brain and the intestinal tract, which causes abnormal contractions in the intestines and can cause the following symptoms:

- Bloating
- Excess gas
- Diarrhea and/or constipation
- Sensation of more stool in the bowel immediately following a movement
- Mucus in the stool
- Nausea
- Heartburn

Risk Factors

The exact cause of IBS is still unclear, but tremendous advances in understanding this common and disabling disorder have been made. For example, doctors now know

that IBS tends to be more common in the following groups:

- People younger than 35
- Women
- People with panic or other psychological disorders
- Those with a family history of IBS

Doctors have also found that the frequency of IBS seems to be the same across ethnic and national boundaries.

Treatment

Treatment options are available to manage IBS whether symptoms are mild, moderate, or severe. Talk to your doctor so he/she can give you the best treatments available for your particular symptoms. Treatment does not necessarily have to include medication. The American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) suggests a few lifestyle changes can be as helpful as medication, including:

- Reducing stress levels

- Learning relaxation techniques
- Exercising or finding a hobby
- Attending counseling sessions
- Being diet-conscious
- Avoiding foods high in fat
- Drinking plenty of water and reducing intake of carbonated beverages
- Not skipping meals, which can cause overeating at the next meal
- Eating a number of small meals each day instead of three large ones
- Keeping a diary of foods eaten and whether or not symptoms are experienced afterwards



Did you know...?

According to the American College of Gastroenterology, after the common cold, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is the second-most frequent reason people take days off of work and school in the United States.