

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)

What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)?

- ▶ Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a health issue found in your intestines (gut).
- ▶ IBS can cause symptoms such as:
 - Belly pain.
 - Cramping.
 - Gas.
 - Bloating (or swelling) of the belly.
 - Change in stool.

- ▶ There are different types of IBS, so each person may not have the same symptoms.

- **IBS-D: IBS With Diarrhea**

- You may often have loose stool.
- You may often feel an urgent need to move your bowels.
- You may often have cramps or belly pain.

- **IBS-C: IBS With Constipation**

- You may find it hard to move your bowels.
- You may not often move your bowels.
- You may have an urge to go but cannot go.



Bowel Movements: What is Normal?

- The frequency of bowel movements among healthy people varies from three movements a day to three a week, but each person has a different normal bowel function.
- A bowel movement each day is not needed for every person.
- Stools should be formed but not hard, and they should have no blood.
- Stools should be passed without too much effort, straining or pain.



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- **IBS-M: IBS Mixed**

- You may have symptoms of both IBS-D and IBS-C.

- ▶ While the cause of IBS is unknown, it can still be treated.
- ▶ IBS is a common health issue, impacting more than 35 million Americans.
- ▶ IBS does not cause lasting harm to the bowels and does not lead to cancer.
- ▶ IBS can impact you physically, emotionally and socially.
- ▶ Most people with IBS are able to control their symptoms through diet, stress management and, sometimes, medication prescribed by their doctors.
- ▶ If you are having symptoms more than three times a month, for more than three months, talk your doctor.
 - Tell your doctor about all your symptoms to get the best treatment plan for you.

Note: IBS is not that same as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). More information on IBD, visit www.gastro.org/patient-care.



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Symptoms

Each person, based on the type of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) they have, will have different symptoms. In general, IBS can cause:

- Belly pain.
- Cramping in the stomach area.
- Gas.
- Bloating (or swelling) of the belly.
- Change in stool:
 - Diarrhea (loose stool).
 - Constipation (hard stool or trouble passing stool).
 - Urgent need to go.
- Sometimes, people with IBS pass mucus with their stool.

Each type of IBS can cause more specific, distinct symptoms.

- **IBS-D: IBS with Diarrhea**
 - You may often have loose stool.
 - You may often feel an urgent need to move your bowels.
 - You may often have cramps or belly pain.
- **IBS-C: IBS with Constipation**
 - You may find it hard to move your bowels.
 - You may not often move your bowels.
 - You may have urge to go but cannot go.
- **IBS-M: IBS Mixed**
 - You may have symptoms of both IBS-D and IBS-C.



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Treatment

There are many treatment options to help care for irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Talk to your doctor to find out which is best for you. Since each person experiences different symptoms with IBS, everyone needs a treatment plan unique to them. If you try one and are still having symptoms, let your doctor know so you can try something different.

Diet

- Many people say that they feel their IBS symptoms after meals.
- For many people, **eating a proper diet in small portions may help lessen IBS symptoms.**
- Before changing your diet, keep a record (food journal) noting which foods seem to cause what symptoms, and talk to your doctor about what you find.
 - Dairy products and high-fat foods often cause issues in some, but not all, IBS patients.
 - Recently, some IBS patients have lessened their symptoms with the low-FODMAP diet.
 - FODMAP refers to a group of five sugars found in certain foods: lactose, fructose (in excess), fructans, galactans and polyols.
 - Certain food items, if poorly absorbed, are broken down by bacteria to cause symptoms like gas, bloating or swelling, belly pain and loose stool.
 - Talk to your doctor or a registered dietitian before making any diet changes on your own.



Medication

- **For IBS With Diarrhea (IBS-D)**
 - Over-the-counter or prescription drugs, such as loperamide, eluxadoline, rifaximin and alosetron, may be used to lessen or stop diarrhea (loose stool).
 - These may include antidiarrheal medications or medications to decrease the motility and secretion of fluid in the intestines.
- **For IBS With Constipation (IBS-C)**
 - Over-the-counter or prescription drugs (such as lubiprostone and linaclotide, which help pass stool), fiber supplements, stool softeners, laxatives and other medications that may stimulate motility (movement) or secretion of fluid in the intestines may be used to lessen or stop constipation.
- Probiotics may also help IBS symptoms and are safe.
- Sometimes, antibiotics can be used with certain patients, but be careful not to use them too often.
- Antidepressant and antispasm drugs can be used when stomach pain is really bad.
- A number of new medications are in clinical trials, and hopefully new treatments will be approved in the near future.

Psychological Treatments

- There are several psychological treatments that can help reduce the symptoms of IBS, including:
 - Cognitive-behavioral treatment.
 - Hypnosis.
 - Stress management.
 - Meditation
 - Other relaxation methods.
- These treatments seem to lessen stomach pain and the mental distress linked to IBS symptoms, improve coping skills and help patients adapt to their symptoms.
- There are no harmful effects and these treatments can be used in addition to or instead of the usual medical treatments.
- Talk to your doctor or health plan to put you in touch with a mental health professional to help you with these treatments.

