

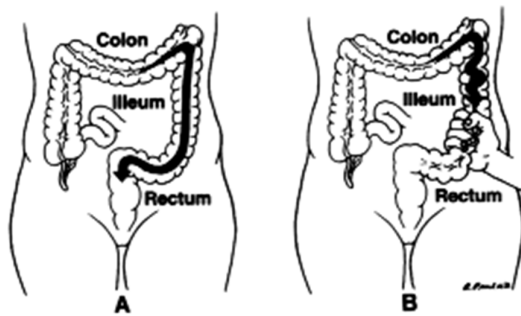
Irritable Bowel Syndrome

What is irritable bowel syndrome?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common disorder that may affect over 15 percent of the population. IBS is one of a range of conditions known as functional gastrointestinal disorders where the bowel may function abnormally, but no structural abnormalities can be found and nothing abnormal is seen on tests.

What are the symptoms of ibs?

People with IBS may experience abdominal pain and changes in bowel habits, either diarrhea, constipation, or both at different times. Symptoms may be mild or severe and vary from person to person. The symptoms may come and go and can change over time. The most predominant symptoms of IBS are abdominal pain, fullness, gas and bloating that have been present for at least 3 days a month for 3 months. The IBS discomfort is often improved after a bowel movement.



What causes ibs?

While there is no clear answer as to what causes IBS, the symptoms of IBS seem to occur as a result of abnormal functioning or communication between the nervous system and the muscles of the bowel. This abnormal regulation may cause the bowel to be “irritated” or act more sensitive. The muscles in the bowel wall may become dis-coordinated and contract too forcefully or weakly at certain times. Although there is no physical obstruction, a patient may perceive cramps as a functional blockage.

IBS is nearly twice as common in women as men. Environmental factors, genetic factors, bacterial activity in the gut, bacterial overgrowth, food intolerance, altered ability of the bowel to move spontaneously, oversensitive intestines, altered nervous system processing, and alterations in hormonal regulation have all been implicated as possible causes of IBS.

What role does stress play in ibs?

IBS is not caused by stress. It is not a psychological or psychiatric disorder. However, emotional stress may contribute to the onset of IBS episodes. Many people may experience increased symptoms of IBS when nervous or anxious.

How can i tell if the problem is ibs or something else?

No single test can confirm the diagnosis of IBS. A careful history and physical examination by a colon and rectal surgeon or other physician are essential to rule out more serious disorders.

Fever, low red blood cell levels, rectal bleeding and unexplained weight loss are not symptoms of IBS and need to be evaluated by your physician.

How is ibs treated?

Understanding that IBS is not a serious or life-threatening condition may relieve anxiety and stress, which contribute to the problem. Stress reduction, use of behavioral therapy, physical therapy, biofeedback, relaxation or pain management techniques can help relieve the symptoms of IBS in some individuals. Use of a dietary or activity diary may help identify certain foods or other factors that cause symptoms.

The goal of treatment is to relieve symptoms. Lifestyle changes such as regular exercise and improved sleep habits may be helpful. Dietary changes can also be helpful in some patients.

Dietary fiber can play either a positive or negative role in IBS. In some people, too much fiber can increase bloating and cause abdominal discomfort. Probiotics or “good bacteria” may also improve the symptoms of IBS and can be used to supplement other dietary modifications.

Individuals with moderate to severe IBS may benefit from prescribed medication. No one medication will work for everyone. Anti-spasmodic medication may be used to help control symptoms. Antidepressants in low doses have also been shown to be helpful in some people with IBS.

How long does the treatment take to relieve symptoms?

Relief of IBS symptoms is often a slow process. It may take six months or more for definite improvement to be appreciated. Patience is very important in dealing with this problem.

What if i choose to do nothing?

IBS does not lead to more serious problems. It does not cause cancer, bleeding or inflammatory bowel diseases such as ulcerative colitis.

If nothing is done, symptoms may come and go. They may get better or worse with time and may continue to impact your quality of life.

What is a colon and rectal surgeon?

Colon and rectal surgeons are experts in the surgical and non-surgical treatment of diseases of the colon, rectum and anus. They have completed advanced surgical training in the treatment of these diseases as well as full general surgical training. Board-certified colon and rectal surgeons complete residencies in general surgery and colon and rectal surgery, and pass intensive examinations conducted by the American Board of Surgery and the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery. They are well-versed in the treatment of both benign and malignant diseases of the colon, rectum and anus and are able to perform routine screening examinations and surgically treat conditions if indicated to do so.