

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)

What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome?

IBS is a common chronic condition that affects the bowels. The exact cause is not fully understood, but it is not dangerous.



What are the symptoms?

- Abdominal pain.
- Changes in how often you have a bowel movement and the type of bowel movement (diarrhea, constipation, or alternating between both).
- Cramping, gas and bloating.
- Feeling like you need to rush to get to a bathroom to have a bowel movement.
- Straining during a bowel movement.
- Feeling that a bowel movement is not finished after you go to the bathroom.

How is IBS diagnosed?

There is no one specific test for IBS. Your health care provider will ask you about your medical history, medications you are taking, and will examine your abdomen.

You may be asked to have some bloodwork or other tests done, especially if you have any of the following:

- Symptoms that first start after age 50.
- A family history of colon cancer or inflammatory bowel disease.
- Weight loss, low iron, blood in your bowel movements, fever, or waking up at night to have a bowel movement.
- Recent hospitalization or use of antibiotics.

How is IBS treated?

IBS is unique to each individual and it may take some time to figure out which treatments are best for you.

Diet: Changing what you eat can sometimes help. It is important to eat well-balanced moderate sized meals. Pay attention to what foods trigger your symptoms. If you have diarrhea, you may be asked to try a low FODMAP diet for a short time and to see a dietitian to learn more about certain foods to limit or avoid.

Stress Management: Finding ways to manage stress is important. Get regular exercise and enough sleep. Consider relaxation activities like walking, yoga and meditation. Counselling can also offer ways to cope with stress and the symptoms of IBS.

Medication: Certain over-the-counter products and prescription medications can help manage symptoms such as pain, diarrhea and constipation. Talk to your health care provider about which options might be best for you.

Online Videos (5 mins each) – Canadian Society for Intestinal Research

Part 1: Overview of IBS and Part 2: Options for IBS treatment.

Online at: <https://www.badgut.org/information-centre/a-z-digestive-topics/ibs/>

More Online IBS Information

- Canadian Digestive Health Foundation: <https://cdhf.ca/>
- Low FODMAP Diet: GI Society (badgut.org): <https://badgut.org/information-centre/health-nutrition/low-fodmap-diet/> and Monash University <https://www.monashfodmap.com/>
- MedLine Plus: <https://medlineplus.gov/irritablebowelsyndrome.html>

My IBS Treatment Plan...