



Signs & Symptoms

- Gas, bloating, pain, or discomfort in the abdomen.
- Chronic diarrhea, constipation (or both).
- Mucus in the stool.

Causes

The cause is not known. A person with IBS has an extra sensitive colon. Muscles in the intestines go into spasm, causing symptoms.

Treatment

Changes in eating habits, stress relief, and medications treat IBS.



Get more information from:

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)
www.niddk.nih.gov

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a problem that mostly affects the bowel (the large intestine) and is not caused by any other bowel disease. It can be painful, does not damage the colon or lead to other health problems.

Questions to Ask

Do you have very severe abdominal pain or tarlike, maroon, or bloody-colored stools?



NO

Do you have any of these problems?

- A lot of mucus in your stools.
- A fever with cramps, pain in the abdomen, or diarrhea.
- Unwanted weight loss.
- IBS symptoms change a lot or get worse.



NO



Self-Care / Prevention

- Don't smoke. If you smoke, quit. Avoid secondhand smoke.
- Keep a log of when symptoms occur. Avoid things that trigger symptoms. Common ones are having: Large meals; fried foods; kidney and other beans; cabbage; broccoli; dairy products with milk sugar (lactose); chocolate; spicy foods; and the artificial sweetener sorbitol.
- Manage stress. (See **Manage Stress** at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- Eat foods with dietary fiber (whole-grain breads and cereals and fruits and vegetables). Kidney beans and other beans are a good source if they do not cause IBS symptoms for you. Talk to your doctor about over-the-counter fiber pills or powders that you mix with water. **{Note:}** Add all types of fiber slowly. Too much, too soon, can worsen symptoms.}
- Drink lots of water. Don't have alcohol and caffeine.
- Get enough rest. Get regular exercise.
- Take an over-the-counter pain reliever as directed. Put a hot water bottle or heating pad (set on low) on your abdomen. Try to relax.