



Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common disorder that affects the large intestine, also known as the colon. It's characterized by a group of symptoms that affect your digestive system. It's a common but uncomfortable gastrointestinal disorder. People with IBS experience excessive gas, abdominal pain, and cramps. It's a chronic condition, so you must manage it long-term.

Symptoms of IBS

The symptoms of IBS can vary greatly from person to person, and they can come and go. The most common symptoms include abdominal pain or cramping, bloating, gastric diarrhea, constipation, or both. These symptoms may be mild or severe and can persist over time. Some people with IBS have symptoms all the time.

Causes and Risk Factors

The exact cause of IBS is not known. It's thought to result from various factors, including problems with the nerves in your gut, changes in your gut bacteria, and severe stress. Certain factors may increase your risk of developing IBS, including being young, being female, having a family history of IBS, and having a mental health problem such as anxiety or depression.

Treatment of IBS

While there's no cure for IBS, treatments can help manage the symptoms. Treatment options include changes in diet and lifestyle, medications, and stress management. Treatment aims to relieve symptoms so you can live as normally as possible.

Don't Confuse IBS vs. IBD

It's easy to confuse the initials IBS and IBD, which are different. The critical differences between IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) and IBD (inflammatory bowel disease) include the nature of the disorders (functional vs. structural), the severity of symptoms, the areas of the digestive tract affected, and the associated health risks. While IBS can cause significant discomfort and affect the quality of life, it does not cause inflammation, ulcers, or other damage to the bowel seen in IBD, nor does it increase the risk of cancer.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

As previously discussed, IBS is a functional disorder, meaning it causes problems with the gut's workings but does not result in visible damage to the digestive tract. It is characterized by abdominal pain, bloating, and changes in bowel habits such as

diarrhea, constipation, or both. The exact cause of IBS is unknown, but it is believed to be a result of several factors, including abnormal movements of the GI tract, increased sensitivity to pain, changes in gut microflora, and psychological factors.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

On the other hand, IBD is a term for two conditions, Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, characterized by chronic digestive tract inflammation. Unlike IBS, IBD is a structural disorder, meaning it can cause visible damage to the digestive tract, which can be seen on tests such as a colonoscopy or CT scan.

Living with IBS

Living with IBS can be challenging, but with the proper treatment and support, most people with IBS can lead full and active lives. Working closely with your healthcare team to find a treatment plan that works for you is essential. Regular check-ups, a healthy diet, exercise, and stress management can all help manage IBS. Irritable Bowel Syndrome is complex, but understanding it can help you manage its symptoms and lead a healthier life. If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with IBS, remember you're not alone; resources and support are available to help you.

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The Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition is a private medical practice comprised of experienced Gastroenterologists, Nurse Practitioners, and staff members dedicated to preventing and treating digestive disorders. Our physicians have been serving the needs of those in Western Pennsylvania and surrounding areas since 1977, having cared for tens of thousands of individuals with digestive problems. Our mission is to deliver high-quality gastroenterology services efficiently and cost-consciously. We realize the very sensitive nature of GI illness and understand the necessity to provide our services in an environment that stresses patient privacy and confidentiality and where patient satisfaction is the goal. Appointments can be conveniently scheduled online via our website above. Learn more about digestive issues on Instagram [@thedigestivetract](https://www.instagram.com/thedigestivetract)

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