

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

What is IBS?

IBS is a gastrointestinal (GI) disorder in which individuals have abdominal pain and altered bowel habits. Common symptoms include bloating, cramping, constipation and/or diarrhea.

Causes of IBS

The causes of IBS are still unclear, but research shows that many factors may be to blame including:

- Genetics
- Environmental and Social Learning
- Diet
- Gut-Bacteria Imbalances
- Low-Grade Inflammation in the Gut
- Abnormal Hormone-Producing Cells in the GI Tract
- Anxiety, Depression, &/or Somatization
- Intestinal Hypersensitivity

Other Things to Know About IBS

- 12% of the North American population has IBS
- 20-60% of people with IBS also have anxiety, depression &/or *somatization.
- Stress has not been shown to cause IBS, but it does worsen the symptoms.
- The leading researchers have stated IBS as a “disorder of the gut-brain interaction.”

Identify the Clues!

Helpful clues to pinpoint the cause of your IBS might be in relation to your diet, stress, new medications, recent travel, infection, anxiety or depression, menstrual cycle or family history.

IBS Symptom Management

- General diet advice:
 - Take time to eat regular meals
 - Avoid missing meals or allowing long gaps between meals
 - Drink at least 64 ounces per day, especially water or other non-caffeinated beverages
 - Restrict tea and coffee to 3 cups per day
 - Reduce intake of alcohol and fizzy/carbonated drinks
 - Increase soluble fiber intake, but limit insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber bulks up the stool and slows digestion. Insoluble fiber is fermented in the intestines causing gas and bloating.
 - Limit fresh fruit to 3 portions (the size of a tennis ball) daily
 - Avoid sorbitol, an artificial sweetener found in sugar-free gum and beverages
- Try a low-FODMAP diet if the above recommendations do not yield desired results
- Find stress management tactics such as meditation, yoga, and psychological therapy
- Take probiotics. Probiotics can be found in foods or supplements. There is limited research on which ones are the best, but it is generally safe to take over-the-counter options.



***Somatization** happens when psychological concerns are converted into physical symptoms