



Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

What is IBS?

IBS is a common chronic condition that affects the bowels, and the exact cause is not fully understood. Though symptoms can be debilitating, the condition is not considered dangerous.

What are the symptoms?

- Abdominal pain, cramping, gas, and bloating.
- Changes in how often you have a bowel movement and the type of bowel movement—diarrhea, constipation, or alternating between both.
- 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 and the drugs you are taking, and will examine your abdomen. You may have other tests, 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 different for each person and it may take time to figure out which treatments are best for you.

Diet: Changing what you eat can sometimes help. Well-balanced, moderate-sized meals are important. Pay attention to foods that 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 about certain foods to limit or avoid. To get started, you might try the FODMAP A to Z app available on Google Play and Apple App Store.

Stress Management: Find ways to manage stress, including regular exercise, enough sleep, and relaxation activities like walking, yoga, and meditation. Counselling can also help.

Medication: Certain over-the-counter and prescription medications can help with some IBS symptoms. Talk to your health care provider about what might be best for you.

ONLINE INFORMATION

Canadian Society for Intestinal Research: videos (5 min each)
Part 1: Overview of IBS; Part 2: Options for IBS treatment
<https://www.badgut.org/information-centre/a-z-digestive-topics/ibs/>.



Canadian Digestive Health Foundation
Lots of information on IBS including signs/symptoms, tests/treatments, and the FODMAP diet. <https://cdhf.ca/digestive-disorders/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/>.