



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT Irritable Bowel Syndrome



What is it Irritable Bowel Syndrome?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a long term chronic disorder that affects the large intestine (colon) commonly causing cramping, abdominal pain, bloating, gas, and irregular bowel habits – very often alternating between diarrhoea and constipation. Other symptoms can include a sense of incomplete emptying of the bowels and passing of mucus from the back passage. Many patients notice they lack energy and sleep poorly.

Affecting 1 in 10 people at some point in their lives it is one of the most common reasons for patients to visit their GP. IBS symptoms are uncomfortable but ARE NOT life threatening - they do not cause changes in bowel tissue or increase your risk of colorectal cancer.

WHAT CAUSES IT?

IBS does not have a single cause - there are many reasons why people develop this condition:

- One in six people develop IBS following a bout of food poisoning or gastroenteritis.
- If the muscles in the bowels are not contracting normally this can affect the movement of the stool.
- The colon may be hypersensitive, overreacting to mild stimulation by going into spasms. Instead of slow, rhythmic muscle contractions, the bowel muscles spasm. That can either cause diarrhoea or constipation.

LIVING WITH IBS

Having IBS gives you something in common with literally millions of other people who live with this disorder every day. There is no cure for IBS and triggers can vary from person to person.

WHAT ARE THE TRIGGERS?

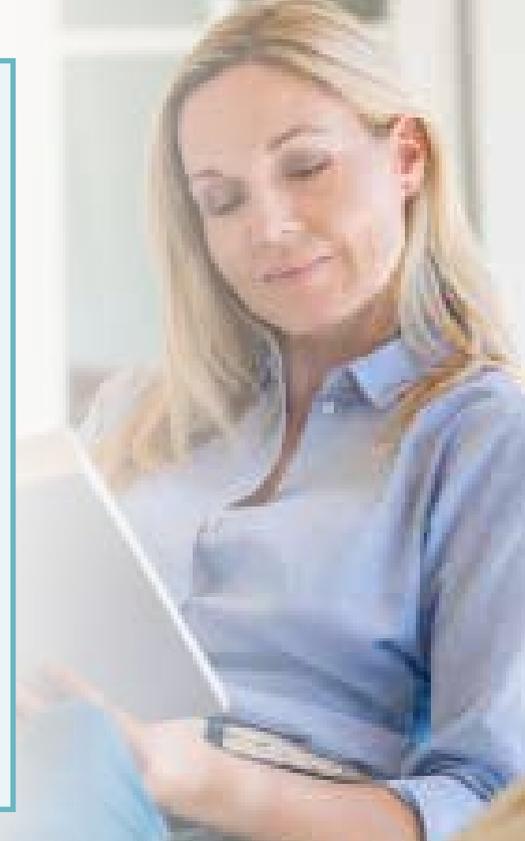
- **Foods.** Many people have more severe symptoms when they eat certain things e.g chocolate, spices, fats, fruits, beans, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, milk, carbonated beverages and alcohol to name a few.
- **Stress.** Most people with IBS find that their signs and symptoms are worse or more frequent during periods of increased stress.
- **Hormones.** Women are twice as likely to have IBS as men and so hormonal changes may play a role in this condition. Many women find that signs and symptoms are worse during or around their menstrual periods.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

Your GP will probably be able to make a diagnosis based on the symptoms that you describe but may wish to carry out tests to rule out other diseases e.g. a simple blood test to rule out anaemia, to make sure the liver and thyroid glands are working properly and to exclude any evidence of inflammation of the bowel. A blood test can also identify an intolerance to wheat.

If you develop any of the symptoms below please seek advice from your doctor:

- A change in bowel habit – especially if you are over the age of 40
- Passing blood from the back passage
- Unintentional weight loss of more than 2kg (4 pounds)
- Diarrhoea waking you from sleep
- Fever



WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?



Diet and Lifestyle

If diet is a suspected cause your GP may be able to give you some advice on what to eat or suggest that you see a dietician to identify food allergies or intolerances, such as lactose intolerance or to highlight poor dietary habits.



Drug Therapy

Drugs to reduce bowel spasm have been used for many years. They are generally very safe and often worth trying. They are mostly available without prescription and your pharmacist will be happy to advise you. Unfortunately they only benefit a relatively small number of patients.



Other treatments

Acupuncture, hypnotherapy and relaxation therapy have been shown to be effective. Hypnotherapy can be obtained through approved therapists who should be members of the British Medical Hypnotherapy Association. Your doctor may advise on counselling, and some specialists believe that a psychological treatment called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) can be helpful.



InHealth | Beechwood Hall | Kingsmead Road
High Wycombe | Bucks | HP11 1JL

T: 01494 560000 | F: 01494 560056
info@inhealthgroup.com
www.inhealthgroup.com

GASTROSCOPY | FLEXIBLE SIGMOIDOSCOPY | COLONOSCOPY
CAPSULE ENDOSCOPY | POLYPECTOMY AND GASTROENTEROLOGY
IBS PATIENT MANAGEMENT