

# Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

*A disorder of intestinal functioning*

## What is it?

The role of the intestines is to move food from the stomach to the anus, while absorbing nutrients and excreting waste along the way.

### **What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome?**

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a “functional” gut disorder. This means that investigations with a camera (colonoscopy) or microscope (biopsy) will show that the intestines are normal. This makes IBS different than other gut disorders, such as Celiac disease and Crohn’s disease, which have abnormal intestines under the microscope.

### **What causes Irritable Bowel Syndrome?**

There are several possible causes of IBS.

1. An imbalance between the good and bad bacteria in your intestines.
2. A change in the motility of your intestines, which is how your intestines move food along.
3. Highly sensitive intestines with different “nerve wiring”. This makes your intestines perceive being stretched by food differently than other people’s intestines.

## What will it do to me?

Possible symptoms of IBS include:

- Bloating
- Pain and cramping
- Gas
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Very frequent or very infrequent bowel movements
- Relief of your symptoms after having a bowel movement
- Increased symptoms when you are stressed or anxious

It’s important to note that research on IBS has not shown that it leads to any long-term complications. IBS **DOES NOT** increase your risk of developing colon cancer, Celiac disease, Crohn’s disease, or other gut disorders.

IBS is not, in itself, a food intolerance (such as lactose intolerance). A food intolerance is a separate diagnosis. IBS is diagnosed when all other possible causes of abdominal pain have been ruled out.

## What can I do?

### **1. Modifying your diet**

Certain foods may be more likely to trigger your IBS symptoms. Keeping a food diary may help you identify these foods. You can also try following a “Low-FODMAP Diet”, which many people with IBS have found helpful.

### **2. Probiotics**

“Biotic” refers to bacteria. A “pro-biotic” helps promote the growth of good, healthy bacteria in your intestines, which can relieve IBS symptoms. Probiotic pills can be purchased at the grocery store/pharmacy, or you can simply eat lots of yogurt, which has good bacteria!

### **3. Pain relief**

There are several ways to relieve IBS-related pain. You may find it helpful to use a heating pad on your abdomen, or to drink warm tea. Yoga and gentle stretching can relieve pain. You may also find it helpful to take an over-the-counter medication such as Ibuprofen (Advil).

### **4. Stress management**

IBS symptoms are often associated with stress levels. Reducing your stress with exercise, meditation, healthy eating, and adequate sleep can reduce your IBS symptoms.

**Still have questions? Ask us @ teachandlearnfm.com**

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**Patient-doctor learning area:** Use this area to write down questions for your doctor or use it as a space for your doctor to answer your questions.



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