

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

Irritable bowel syndrome is one of the most common gastrointestinal conditions. It is usually associated with emotional stress or poor dietary habits. Symptoms usually appear during late teen or early 20's and are more common in females than males. IBS is diagnosed on the basis of 1) abdominal pain, 2) altered bowel habits (constipation, diarrhea, or alternating constipation and diarrhea) and 3) when other more serious conditions have been ruled out.

*IBS may also be called irritable colon, spastic colon, nervous colon. "Colitis" is an inappropriate term because IBS does not involve inflammation of the colon. Irritable bowel syndrome is the most appropriate term because it refers to gastrointestinal irritability, related to the exaggeration of normal bowel patterns. Bowel motility patterns can be influenced by factors such as meals, emotionally stressful situations, depression, anxiety, and medications.

*Abdominal pain associated with IBS is caused by spasms in the bowel and may be relieved temporarily by a bowel movement. This type of abdominal pain does not awaken you from sleep.

*IBS is not associated with weight loss or GI bleeding. Notify your doctor if either of these two symptoms occur, or if you have a significant change in bowel patterns.

*It is not advised to use chemical laxatives because you can become dependent on them and your bowel could lose its ability to function normally.

*WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Stress: 1. Avoid stressful situations.
2. Learn new ways to cope with stress. Use relaxation techniques.

Diet: 1. Eat more fiber (bulk, roughage- see list of high fiber foods) which helps to normalize the time it takes your body to eliminate wastes. Omit the foods that seem to aggravate your problem.
2. Eat at regular hours. Chew food thoroughly.
3. Drink lots of liquids, especially fruit juices and water.

Habits: 1. Exercise daily.
2. Be sensitive to your body's needs- answer the "urge" to eliminate promptly. Avoid straining to have a bowel movement.

HIGH FIBER FOODS

- *Bran, whole grains, cereals
bran cereals, bran muffins, brown rice, whole wheat breads
- *Raw fruit (including skin and pulp)
apples, grapes, melons, nectarines, oranges, peaches, pears, plums, berries
- *Cooked or dried fruit
applesauce, apricots, prunes, raisins
- *Raw vegetables
broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, lettuce, spinach
- *Cooked high-residue vegetables
asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts, beans, cauliflower, corn, potatoes, rhubarb, spinach, squash, string beans, turnips