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We help patients to become better  
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so you can get better care in partnership  
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! therapy is the most Powerful Medicine

#### OUR GOALS

1. Encouraging health insurance companies to invest in patient .education
2. .Advocating information therapy
3. rk ofSetting up a national netwo .patient education centers
4. Developing patient educational materials in Indian Languages for .the web

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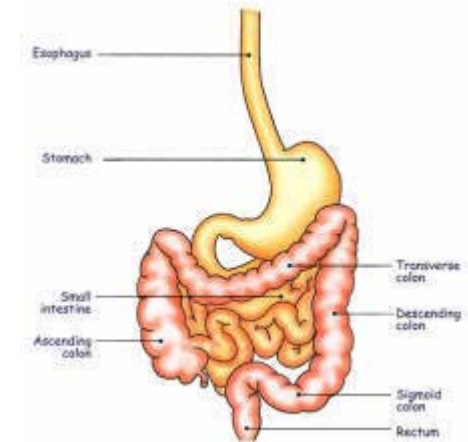
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## IBS - Irritable Bowel Syndrome



Understanding IBS

## DEFINITION

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Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common disorder that affects the large intestine (colon). Irritable bowel syndrome commonly causes cramping, abdominal pain, bloating, gas, diarrhea and constipation. Despite these uncomfortable signs and symptoms, IBS doesn't cause permanent damage to your colon.

Irritable bowel syndrome doesn't cause inflammation or changes in bowel tissue or increase your risk of colorectal cancer. In many cases, you can control irritable bowel syndrome by managing your diet, lifestyle and stress.

## SYMPTOMS

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The signs and symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome can vary widely from person to person and often resemble those of other diseases. Among the most common are:

- Abdominal pain or cramping
- A bloated feeling
- Gas (flatulence)
- Diarrhea or constipation — sometimes alternating bouts of constipation and diarrhea
- Mucus in the stool

For most people, IBS is a chronic condition, although there will likely be times when the signs and symptoms are worse and times when they improve or even disappear completely.

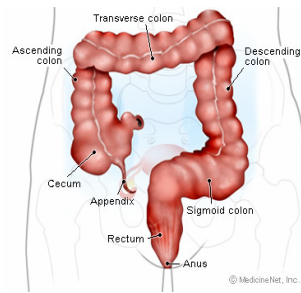
## When to see a doctor

It's important to see your doctor if you have a persistent change in bowel habits or if you have any other signs or symptoms of IBS because these may indicate a more serious condition, such as colon cancer.

Your doctor may be able to help you find ways to relieve symptoms as well as rule out other more-serious colon conditions, such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease, which are forms of inflammatory bowel disease, and colon cancer. Your doctor can also help you avoid possible complications from problems such as chronic diarrhea.

## CAUSES

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The walls of the intestines are lined with layers of muscle that contract and relax in a coordinated rhythm as they move food from your stomach through your intestinal tract to your rectum. If you have irritable bowel syndrome, the contractions may be stronger and last longer than normal. Food is forced through your intestines more quickly, causing gas, bloating and diarrhea.

In some cases, the opposite occurs. Food passage slows, and stools become hard and dry. Abnormalities in your nervous system or colon also may play a role,

causing you to experience greater than normal discomfort when your abdomen stretches from gas.

## Triggers bother some, not others

IBS can range from gas or pressure on your intestines to certain foods, medications or emotions. For example:

## Foods, Stress, Hormones & Other Illness,

## COMPLICATIONS

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Diarrhea and constipation, both signs of irritable bowel syndrome, can aggravate hemorrhoids. In addition, if you avoid certain foods, you may not get enough of the nutrients you need, leading to malnourishment.

But the condition's impact on your overall quality of life may be the most significant complication. IBS is likely to limit your ability to:

**Make or keep plans with friends and family, Enjoy a healthy sex life, Reach your professional**

These effects of IBS may cause you to feel you're not living life to the fullest, leading to discouragement or even depression.



