

Bowel Syndrome

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common disease that affects mainly the colon. People suffering from it may experience cramp, abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhoea, constipation and change in stool consistency. It occurs more in women than in men, most of them aged between 20 and 40.

The exact cause of IBS is unknown. Stress and certain foods can bring about IBS. People suffering from gastroenteritis may sometimes develop IBS. There are three kinds of IBS: IBS from diarrhoea; from constipation; and from diarrhoea and constipation alternately. IBS causes discomfort and distress. In some cases, the victim may not be able to work, attend social events, or travel short distances.

IBS is generally diagnosed with the help of the patient's complete medical history and physical examinations. Diagnostic tests may also help to find out whether other diseases such as infection, gastroesophageal reflux (stomach acids that cause heartburns, chest pains, nausea) and colon cancer may be causing the IBS.

There is no cure for IBS. Treatments for IBS focus on reducing the symptoms. IBS may be controlled through changing one's diet: avoiding dairy products, high-gas foods, and increasing fiber intake. Lifestyle change and stress management may also help reduce the symptoms. If these treatments are ineffective, medications may be the answer. The prescribed medicines include stool softeners and laxatives to deal with constipation-predominant IBS, and anti-diarrhoea drugs to prevent or treat diarrhoea-related IBS. Antispasmodic drugs are prescribed to reduce cramps or spasms in the stomach, intestine or bladder, while selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor anti-depressants (SSRIs), a class of compounds to treat depression, anxiety and some personality disorders, may be prescribed together with laxatives or anti-diarrhoea medicines.