

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

What You Need to Know

Did you know that if you often have stomach cramps, bloating, gas, diarrhea, or constipation, you could have irritable bowel syndrome?

What is irritable bowel syndrome?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a functional disorder of the large bowel, meaning the bowel doesn't work, or function, correctly. IBS is not a disease, but a group of symptoms.

What are the symptoms of IBS?

The main symptoms of IBS are

- pain or discomfort in the abdomen, often relieved by a bowel movement
- chronic diarrhea, constipation, or both

Other symptoms include

- whitish mucus in the stool
- a swollen or bloated abdomen
- the feeling that you have not finished a bowel movement

Women with IBS often have more symptoms during their menstrual periods.

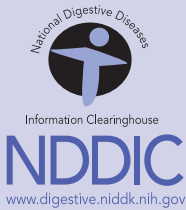
How will I know if I have IBS?

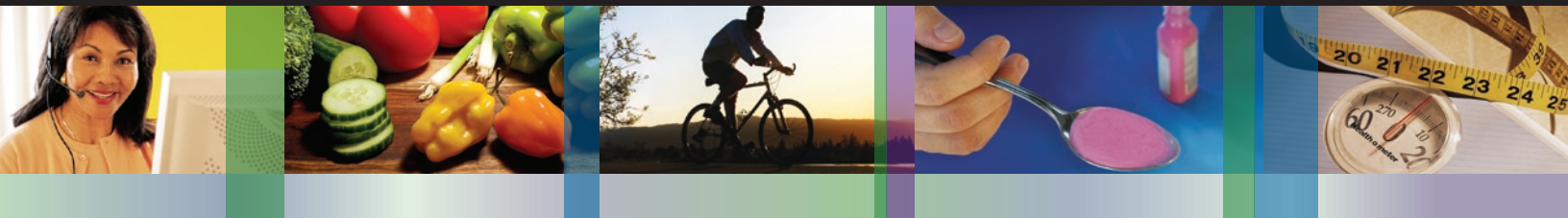
Your doctor may diagnose IBS based on your symptoms. No specific test for IBS exists, but your doctor may do some tests to rule out other health problems that can cause the same symptoms.

What can I do about IBS?

IBS has no cure but you can take some steps to relieve symptoms. You might have to try a few different things to see what works best for you. Your doctor can help you find the right treatment plan, which may include

- avoiding foods that can trigger symptoms, such as fatty foods, milk products, and carbonated drinks
- eating foods with fiber
- eating four or five small meals instead of three big meals
- taking medicines that help relieve symptoms
- reducing emotional stress





Where can I get more information about IBS?

National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse

2 Information Way
Bethesda, MD 20892-3570
Phone: 1-800-891-5389
Fax: 703-738-4929
Email: nddic@info.niddk.nih.gov
Internet: www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov

The National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). The NIDDK is part of the National Institutes of Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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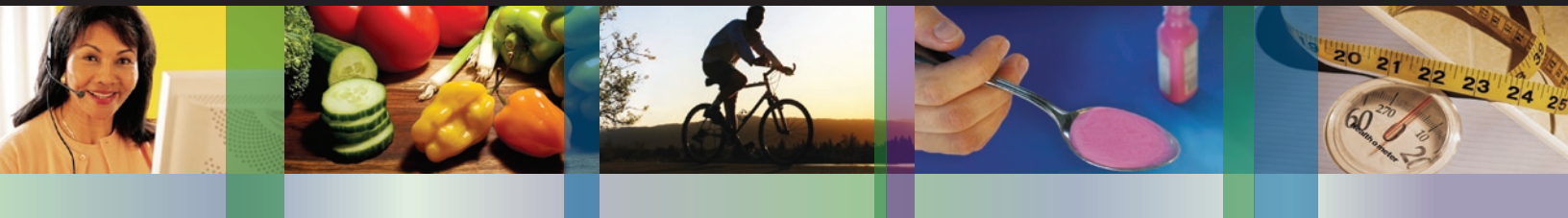


The NIDDK Awareness and Prevention Series is designed to make you ask yourself, "Could this be me or someone I care for?" So take a closer look. Additional information on this topic and other titles in the series is available through the National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse or on the Internet at www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov.



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La Serie del NIDDK para el Conocimiento y la Prevención está concebida para que usted se pregunte: “¿Podría tratarse de mí o de alguien que me importa?” Por favor léalo con cuidado. Puede obtener más información sobre este tema y otros títulos de la serie a través del National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NDDIC), o por Internet en www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov. También puede encontrar y leer las publicaciones del NDDIC disponibles en español en www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov/spanish/indexsp.asp.



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