

# Irritable bowel syndrome – adult

## Patient education

### What is irritable bowel syndrome?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a collection of symptoms affecting the gastrointestinal tract (GI tract).

The body sends signals back and forth between the intestines and the brain to regulate how the GI tract works. If you have IBS, these signals may be disrupted. As a result, the GI tract does not function normally. The intestines may become more sensitive and react inappropriately to certain stimuli.

The four types of IBS are listed below:

- IBS with diarrhea
- IBS with constipation
- Mixed IBS
- Unsubtyped IBS

### What causes irritable bowel syndrome?

The cause of IBS is unknown.

### What increases the risks?

- You are female
- You are younger than 40 years of age
- You have a family history of IBS
- You have a mental health condition
- You have had a bacterial infection within your GI tract

### What are the potential symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome?

- Diarrhea, constipation or both
- Swelling or bloating of the abdomen
- Feeling full after a small/regular sized meal

- Constant passing of gas
- Mucus in stool
- Incomplete emptying after a bowel movement

***\*Symptoms typically appear suddenly and go.***

## **How to treat irritable bowel syndrome:**

- Making changes to your diet:
  - Avoid food that cause symptoms
  - Increase water consumption
  - Follow a low-FODMAP (fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, and polyols) diet.
  - Consume more fibre
  - Eat regular-sized meals at the same times
- Medicines
  - Fibre supplements
  - Antidiarrheal medicine
  - Antispasmodic medicine
- Therapy
- Working with a dietitian
- Managing your stress

**If you have been diagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome, please contact your doctor or health care provider immediately if you are experiencing any of the following:**

- Constant pain
- Weight loss
- Difficulty swallowing
- Diarrhea that progressively gets worse

**If you have been diagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome, please get help immediately if you are experiencing any of the following:**

- You have abdominal pain
- You have a fever
- You have blood in your stool
- Vomiting does not stop
- There is blood in your vomit

## Where can I get more information?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) - Canadian Digestive Health

Website: <https://cdhf.ca/digestive-disorders/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/>

Reference: Irritable bowel syndrome. (2021, June 14). Elsevier Inc: ClinicalKey for Nursing.

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