

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

Irritable bowel syndrome, or “IBS,” is a condition that causes belly pain and problems with bowel movements. As many as one in five Americans have IBS symptoms making it one of the most common disorders diagnosed by doctors. Some people with the condition have frequent, diarrhea, while others have constipation. Some patients switch back and forth between diarrhea and constipation.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms can include stomach pain and cramps, diarrhea or constipation, bloating, gas, feeling full too quickly when eating, and/or nausea.

CAUSES

While we are still gaining more knowledge about IBS through researches, some facts are well-known. Certain foods, such as coffee, alcohol, spices, raw fruits, vegetables, artificial sweeteners and even milk, can cause the dysfunction of the bowel. In these instances, avoidance of these substances is the simplest treatment.

Gastrointestinal infections, illnesses, travel, and even changes in the weather somehow can be associated with a flare-up in symptoms. So can the premenstrual cycle in the female.

By far, the most common factor associated with the symptoms of IBS are the interactions between the brain and the gastrointestinal tract. The bowel has a rich supply of nerves that are in communication with the brain. Virtually everyone has had, at one time or another, some alteration in bowel function when under intense stress, such as before an important relationship conflicts, performance event, school examination, or a family issues.

People with IBS seem to have an overly sensitive bowel, and perhaps a super abundance of nerve impulses flowing to the gastrointestinal tract so that the ordinary stresses and strains of living somehow result in bowel dysfunction.

These exaggerated contractions can be demonstrated by placing pressure- sensing devices in the bowel. Even at rest, with no obvious stress, the pressures tend to be higher than normal. With the routine interactions of daily living, these pressures tend to rise dramatically. When an emotionally charged situation is discussed, they can reach extreme levels not found in people without IBS. These symptoms are due to real physiologic changes in the gastrointestinal tract—a gastrointestinal tract that tends to be inherently overly sensitive, and one that overreacts to the stresses and strains of ordinary living.

DIAGNOSIS

Unfortunately, there is no specific test. However, the diagnosis of IBS can often be suspected by patient’s history. Ultimately, it is a diagnosis of exclusion—ruling out other illnesses because a number of gastrointestinal illnesses such as inflammatory bowel diseases, cancer, and infection, can mimic some or all of the IBS symptoms. Therefore, some medical tests are helpful in making this diagnosis. The typical workup may include laboratory tests, imaging tests, upper endoscopy, and/or colonoscopy. Additional tests often are required depending on the specific circumstances in each case.

TREATMENT

The treatment of IBS requires a multidisciplinary approach by addressing both the gastrointestinal tract and the psyche. Certain medicines can ease the symptoms of IBS. Diet needs to be reviewed and modified. Counseling might also help with IBS, because stress and worry can make the condition worse. Physical exercise may be helpful as during exercise, the bowel typically quiets down.

SUMMARY

IBS is a common condition. It can be extremely frustrating and at times a debilitating condition that interferes with normal daily life, including job performance and social life.

Unfortunately, for many diagnosed with IBS, there is also a sense of frustration in regards to how they are perceived and treated by their physician. Many feel that because IBS conditions are so varied, they are not taken seriously, and that only basic symptoms are just treated, without consideration to their overall gastrointestinal health.

At Comprehensive Digestive Institute of Nevada, we consider IBS a condition that needs to be properly diagnosed. Other, more serious causes need to be considered and either treated or ruled out first. Our physicians work with the IBS patient individually to create a treatment plan tailored to their diagnosis, not a general one-size fits all treatment. Also, our physicians want the patient to play an active role in their diagnosis and treatment, and will work with the patient to make sure the treatment plan is working.

Our center utilizes a multidisciplinary team approach to your healthcare, which means that patients benefit from the combined expertise of physicians who have the knowledge, perspective and experience to address all aspects of your complete gastroenterological care.

We offer the most advanced diagnostic techniques and treatments for a wide variety of gastroenterological conditions. We also offer a full range of diagnostic procedures, as well as medical, surgical and minimally invasive treatment options to meet the individual needs of patients with gastroenterological conditions.