

# Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a biopsychosocial disorder, affecting the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, resulting in both upper and lower GI symptoms. The most common symptoms include abdominal pain, constipation or diarrhea, and bloating after eating. Stress or the ingestion of food often triggers symptoms.

√ IBS represents about one half of all GI abnormalities.

√ IBS more commonly affects women than men.

\*Treatment strategies may include medications, psychotherapy, and diet modifications.

**Common signs and symptoms** may include:

- bloating
- headache
- gas
- fatigue
- nausea
- depression
- anxiety
- difficulty with concentration

**Diet recommendations** are as follows:

- A balanced diet, as tolerated, should be followed.
- Dried beans, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cucumbers, onion, radishes, turnips, and melons contain sulfur compounds and may cause heartburn, abdominal distention (bloating) and flatulence (gas).
- Apple and grape juice, bananas, nuts, and raisins may increase gas production.
- Dairy products should be consumed if tolerated, but may cause gas or bloating if lactose intolerance exists.
- Sorbitol and fructose are sweeteners that may disturb bowel function. - Sorbitol is an artificial sweetener used in dietetic food, and sugar free. Gums and fructose is a natural sugar in fruits, berries, and plants.
- Decreasing fat intake with meals may lessen abdominal pain that occurs after eating.
- For constipation, slowly increasing fiber will speed up gastric motility and lessen symptoms of IBS. High fiber foods include whole grains, legumes, bran, and fruits and vegetables - especially those with edible seeds and skins. When increasing fiber, it is important to increase fluid intake of decaffeinated beverages.
- Eat at least three meals each day, and include one or two small snacks between meals. Try eating smaller portions, and eating more slowly.
- Coffee, tea, alcohol, and smoking can also aggravate IBS. Monitor their effects and eliminate them if symptoms lessen.
- Regular physical activity assists in bowel function and reduces stress.