



IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

What is IBS?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a condition that affects the digestive system. The cause is unknown but it has been linked to food passing through the gut at the wrong speed, oversensitive nerves in your gut, stress and family history. There is currently no cure and therefore is a lifelong condition, but diet changes and medicines can often help control the symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

- Stomach pain or cramps – which gets better after going to the toilet
- Bloating
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Flatulence
- Passing mucus in your stool
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Back problems
- Irregularities with urinating
- Bowel incontinence

What are the causes?

The exact cause is not known however it can be caused by:

- Muscle contractions in the intestine. Contractions in the walls of the intestines is what keeps food moving through. If there are changes to the strength of these it can cause gas, bloating and diarrhoea or hard and dry stools.
- Issues with the nerves in your digestive system which may cause discomfort when your abdomen stretches from gas or stool due to the nervous system overreacting to these things.
- Severe viral or bacterial infection can damage the digestive system. This is called gastroenteritis. IBS might also be associated with a surplus of bacteria in the intestines (bacterial overgrowth).
- Early life stress. People exposed to stressful events, especially in childhood, tend to have more symptoms of IBS.
- Changes in gut microbes. Research indicates that the microbes in people with IBS might differ from those in people who don't have IBS.

What about treatment?

- Manage with nutrition; find your triggers and try to avoid them e.g. some people find sweeteners trigger their IBS.
- Medicine management; depending on your symptoms you can be offered a few medications. Peppermint Oil or probiotics can be helpful. If you are having quite a lot of discomfort you may want to discuss with your GP about pain medication.

SELF CARE TIPS

DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

Being dehydrated can exacerbate symptoms such as constipation and gas as lack of water affects the digestive system.

REGULAR EXERCISE

Exercise can help with IBS symptoms in a number of ways, it relieves stress that often triggers IBS, it can aid with constipation and it improves your overall health. But be wary of your limits.

EAT A HIGHER FIBRE DIET

Fibre aids in digestion and bowel movements and so increasing fibre is advised.

KEEP A FOOD DIARY

Keeping a food diary can help to notify triggers in your diet. IBS trigger can be very individual.

To register with Bromley Well:

Freephone 0808 278 7898

Or register online:

www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer

Contact Lifestyle Support direct

07985 431484 / 07985 444210

or email

enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk



FURTHER RESOURCES

The IBS Network

A national charity that supports people with IBS through information, advice and peer support group.

BDA – The Association of Dieticians IBS Factsheet

Food fact sheet including advice on foods can often be triggers for people with IBS.

NHS Conditions IBS

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of IBS. It also includes information about recovery from stroke and about the rehabilitation services you might be entitled to.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/> NHS inform <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/stomach-liver-and-gastrointestinal-tract/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/managing-irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs>

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