



IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated December 2025

What is IBS?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a condition that affects the digestive system. The cause of IBS 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 for IBS, but diet changes and medicines can 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

SELF CARE TIPS

DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

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

REGULAR EXERCISE

Exercise can help with IBS symptoms in a number of ways, by relieving stress which can trigger IBS. It can also help reduce constipation and improve your overall health.

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



What are the causes?

Some suspected causes of IBS are:

- 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; identify your triggers and try to avoid them. For example, some people find sweeteners trigger their IBS.
- Medicine management; depending on your symptoms you can be offered 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

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 triggers 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



IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated December 2025

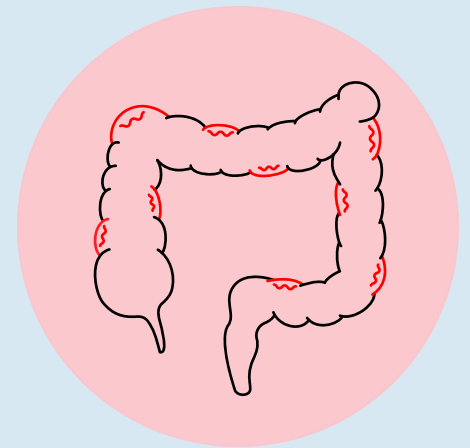
Some myths

Myth 1: Irritable bowel syndrome is not a real illness

Not true! Irritable bowel syndrome is a very real illness that can heavily impact a person's quality of life. While psychological factors, including stress, can make IBS symptoms worse, IBS exists as its own condition. As there is currently no known cure for IBS, finding out what triggers your symptoms can help you to manage your condition. Avoiding trigger foods, exercising regularly, and using relaxation techniques to manage your stress levels can all help to indirectly manage irritable bowel syndrome.

Myth 2: Everyone has the same triggers

Incorrect – factors that trigger irritable bowel syndrome symptoms can be different for everyone. That's why keeping a food diary can be helpful to track whether any particular foods trigger your symptoms. The symptoms that are caused by triggers can also differ from person to person. From the same trigger, one person might experience diarrhoea, while someone else could experience constipation. Tracking your symptoms and any changes in sleep, stress, or diet can help with managing your symptoms overall.



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

www.theibsnetwork.org

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

BDA – The Association of Dieticians IBS Factsheet

www.bda.uk.com/resource/irritable-bowel-syndrome-diet.html

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

NHS Conditions IBS

www.nhs.uk/conditions/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of IBS.

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

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