

Treating Irritable Bowel Syndrome

What is irritable bowel syndrome?

Irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, is stomach discomfort or pain that happens with constipation, diarrhea, or both.

How is it treated?

IBS can't be cured, but symptoms can be treated. There are many types of treatments, and your doctor can help you decide what is best for you. These treatments include:

Exercise: Three to five times per week.

Laxatives: Over-the-counter laxatives, such as polyethylene glycol (one brand: Miralax). This may help with constipation, but probably not with stomach pain.

Antidiarrheal medicines: Over-the-counter loperamide (one brand: Imodium). This may help with diarrhea, but probably not with stomach pain.

Probiotics: Probiotics are found in some over-the-counter supplements and yogurts. Common probiotics are *Lactobacillus*, *Bifidobacterium*, and *Streptococcus*.

Prescription medicines: Your doctor also may prescribe a medicine to help with more severe symptoms. But, these medicines could cause side effects.

Other treatments: Relaxation, hypnosis, acupuncture, herbal medicines, and peppermint oil.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

American Academy of Family Physician's Patient Education Resource
Web site: <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/digestive/disorders/112.html>

International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders
Web site: <http://aboutIBS.org>

Irritable Bowel Syndrome Self Help and Support Group
Web site: <http://www.ibsgroup.org>

Medline Plus
Web site: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/irritablebowelsyndrome.html>

National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse
Web site: <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/ibs/>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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