

- Chronic disease

COPING WITH IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

Range of symptoms and may affect patients This digestive condition can have a wide differently; hence it necessitates a personalised treatment strategy

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Cramps, bloating, puffiness in your belly area, constipation and diarrhoea — stomach problems are never fun. While a simple upset stomach won't last forever, a condition called irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can be ongoing. Hence, knowing which one is cramping your style and killing your vibe is important.

This digestive condition can have a wide range of symptoms and may affect patients differently; hence it necessitates a personalised treatment strategy

Ways to manage IBS

1. Elimination of dairy (DASH) is a standard treatment for IBS. Large amounts of dairy products like milk, cheese, cream, etc. cause gas in people with irritable bowel syndrome.
2. Making other small changes in diet may be helpful. For example, eating more fibre-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes can help.
3. Some people with IBS may benefit from probiotics, which are live bacteria that help with digestion.
4. While dealing with the condition, it's important to stay hydrated and avoid caffeine, alcohol, and spicy foods.
5. Avoiding stress is also important, as stress can worsen IBS symptoms. Relaxation techniques like yoga and meditation can be helpful.

IBS can affect your life in many ways. It can cause abdominal pain, bloating, and changes in bowel habits. It can also affect your quality of life. However, there are many ways to manage IBS and improve your symptoms. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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“Irritable bowel syndrome is a disease with a collection of symptoms such as abdominal pain, cramps, bloating, diarrhoea and constipation. It significantly reduces a patient’s quality of life. It is very common and is not lifethreatening. There is no anatomical or structural problem in the gut in people suffering from IBS. A patient typically will have symptoms that will come and go and are exacerbated by stress, emotional changes, or certain food items,” says Dr Ruchit B Patel, consultant gastroenterologist, Wockhardt Hospital, Mumbai.

The main symptoms of IBS are belly pain along with a change in bowel habits. This can include constipation, diarrhoea, or both. You may get cramps in your belly or feel like your bowel movement isn't finished. Many people who have it feel gassy and notice that their abdomen is bloated. Persistent pain and frequent trips to the bathroom can make everyday life harder.

“Bleeding in the rectum, night diarrhoea, unexplainable weight loss, anaemia, unusual vomiting, difficulty swallowing, pain in the stomach area that is not linked to gas or bowel movement are symptoms that warrant

Physical activity can help with digestion, reduce stress, and improve your mood

PTelemedicine MD, Loop Health

Motivation and behavioural therapy play a major role in treating functional bowel disorders because mental health is directly intertwined with the performance of the gastrointestinal system. DR WASEEM AHMED,

a doctor's visit,” says Dr Veerendra Sandur, lead consultant – medical gastroenterology, Aster RV Hospital, Bengaluru.

While there is no single cause for IBS, there are multiple factors that can contribute towards it. “It may be due to altered movement of the small and large intestine, hypersensitivity of intestine, psychological factors like stress, coping with stress, depression, anxiety. Particularly childhood stress may be a more important cause. Intolerance to some type of food can also trigger IBS,” says Dr Jayaraj SP, consultant – medical gastroenterologist, Columbia Asia Hospital Sarjapur Road, Bengaluru.

Dr Purshottam Vashistha, senior consultant, gastroenterology, Nanavati Max Super Speciality Hospital, points that muscles contractions in the intestinal walls help to move food through digestive tract. “And weaker contractions can lead to indigestion and dryer defecation, causing IBS,” he shares. It is also more likely to affect people who have a family history of IBS. Symptoms usually start before you're 35 years old. It is uncommon for people over 50 to get IBS for the first time. “In India, IBS is more common among women. Estrogen therapy before or after menopause also is a risk factor for IBS. Genes may play a role, as may shared factors in a family's environment or a combination of genes and environment,” shares Dr Waseem Ahmed, telemedicine MD, Loop Health.

The treatment plan will depend on specific symptoms and triggers, but many people start with diet changes. “Many patients improve with proper counselling, motivation and behavioural therapy which play a major role in treating functional bowel disorders,” Dr Ahmed concludes.

IBS can introduce both constipation and diarrhoea