

Irritable Bowel Syndrome Treatments

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is an abnormal function of the gastrointestinal tract. Up to 20% of Americans may be affected by this condition. Symptoms of IBS range from mild to severe, including abdominal cramping, bloating, diarrhea, and or constipation. This condition may be due to a change in the nerves that control muscle contractions in the bowel, or changes in the central nervous system that is connected to the colon. Hormonal changes also may play a role. Certain foods and beverages, such as chocolate, alcohol, and milk may trigger symptoms. Stress may make symptoms worse, however is not considered to be a cause of IBS symptoms.

There are many treatments available that target the relief of IBS symptoms. Fiber supplements, such as psyllium (*Metamucil*) and methylcellulose (*Citrucel*), may benefit individuals experiencing constipation. Loperamide (*Imodium*) is available over-the-counter for the relief of diarrhea. Hyoscyamine (*Levsin*) is an anticholinergic medication that works in the nervous system to relieve bowel spasms. Lubiprostone (*Amitiza*) is a newer medication approved for women 18 years of age and older that experience constipation related to IBS. This medication is taken twice daily and increases fluid secretion in the small intestine to facilitate stool passage.