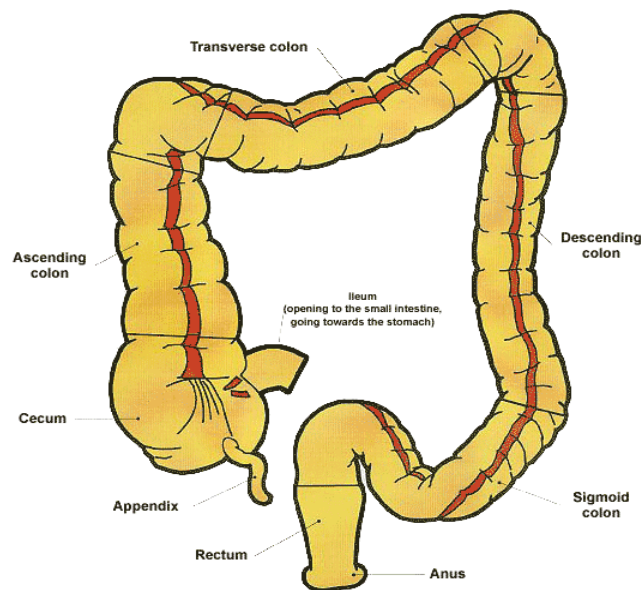


Guide to Understanding Irritable Bowel Syndrome



Description

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a disruption of the intestinal tract. Its symptoms include abdominal pain, bloating and abnormal bowel movements. Diarrhea may often alternate with constipation, while pain and bloating may be relieved by a bowel movement. With IBS, nerve endings in the bowel are unusually sensitive, which means even normal bowel events such as passing fluid or gas cause abnormal muscle reactions.

IBS is known as a functional disorder as there is no direct cause of the syndrome. Symptoms appear to be caused by contraction of your bowel muscles. The contraction results from increased sensitivity within the bowel to almost anything: eating, stress, emotional arousal or gaseous distention.

Approximately 10-20% of adults experience the symptoms of IBS. Its symptoms are the second most common cause of workplace absenteeism, after the common cold. Its impact differs between people because of their alternating constipation and diarrhea. However, with

some simple lifestyle changes, those same people say that their lives are back to normal.

People who have had IBS often say they felt like their life revolved around the bathroom because of their alternating constipation and diarrhea. However, as mentioned previously, with some simple lifestyle changes, those same people say that their lives are back to normal.

Treatment

It has been established that 10% of people who suffer from IBS get better each year. Of course, this will be affected by your lifestyle and stress levels but you have the ability to control the symptoms of IBS.

Changing diets will help many people with IBS, but it varies from person to person. Caffeine, nicotine and/or alcohol and foods such as dietary fats should be avoided as these are common triggers of your symptoms. However, any food can trigger your IBS symptoms. Learning what is right and wrong is the best way to minimize the effects of IBS and maximize the benefits of your diet. Generally, adding bran or another natural source fibre, like the psyllium in Metamucil, to your diet can help to relieve the constipation associated with IBS.

Here are a few tips to help treat IBS:

- ✓ Take some time to evaluate your eating habits and levels of stress, as this is important in minimizing IBS symptoms.
- ✓ Try to increase dietary fibre and avoid foods that trigger your symptoms. Also, remember to drink at least 8 glasses of fluid per day.
- ✓ Avoid or develop coping mechanisms for stress. Stress may be triggered by overwork, poor sleep habits or personal difficulties.
- ✓ Proper balance between rest and exercise can help reduce stress levels and help with IBS.