



Irritable Bowel Syndrome



Irritable Bowel Syndrome can affect people from any age and from all walks of life. It is one of the most common disorders seen by primary care physicians and affects approximately 30% of the general population at some time in their lives. Due to it not being the most pleasant topic of conversation, a lot of us suffer in silence but it's important to know that you're not alone.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome, or IBS as it's most commonly called, is a bowel function disorder in which the intestinal nerves become overactive causing problems such as constipation and/or diarrhea. Symptoms can include:

- Frequent abdominal cramping and/or pain which is relieved when you have been to the toilet
- Bloating, discomfort and gas
- Constipation and/or diarrhea
- The need to go to the toilet frequently or feeling of incomplete emptying of the bowel
- Heartburn, palpitations
- Fatigue, headache, faintness

How does this happen?

The lining of the colon, called the epithelium, regulates the flow of fluids in and out of the colon and is affected by the immune and nervous system. IBS occurs when the contents inside the colon move too quickly. The colon then loses its ability to absorb fluids and as a result, there becomes too much fluid in the stool. In other people, the movement inside the colon is too slow, which causes extra fluid to be absorbed. As a result, a person develops constipation.

People affected by IBS experience strong muscular spasms or contractions in the colon that come and go. They can be spasmodic, or can temporarily stop working.

Why does this happen?

It is not completely understood why people end up with IBS. There are though, a few different things that have been known to trigger it. Examples of these are:

- **Certain foods** - Such as wheat, rye, barley, chocolate, dairy products, and dark red meats. The most difficult foods for the body to digest are fats and certain animal products and as a result are the most powerful IBS triggers for both constipation and diarrhea.
- **Some medicines** - Check with your local GP to find out which ones you shouldn't be taking and if so find an alternative.
- **Certain drinks** - Especially those with caffeine such as tea, coffee, and colas, milk and other dairy drinks (e.g. yoghurt drinks) and alcohol.
- **Bacterial infection** - Recent studies show that an infection in the gastrointestinal tract may be linked to the onset of IBS. Some people that have suffered with gastroenteritis (inflammation or infection of the gastrointestinal tract primarily stomach and intestines) have ended up with IBS.

- **Stress** - Like the heart and the lungs, the colon is partly controlled by the nervous system which responds to stress. Spasms of the colon in people with IBS can be triggered by emotional stress, feeling tense, troubled, angry or nervous as stress makes the mind more aware of sensations.

How can I control IBS?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome is not something that will worsen over time. Unfortunately, it may take a while for your system to be back to normal and even then it might come back in times of severe stress or crisis. For some, it may never go away completely so it's important to be aware of your personal triggers so that you can try to avoid them.

- Eat a varied diet
- Drink plenty of water - 8 glasses per day
- Find your individual trigger foods and avoid them
- Try eating 6 small meals per day rather than 3 big ones
- Learn new and better ways to deal with your stress
- Avoid using laxatives, you may become reliant on them and weaken your intestines

Having Irritable Bowel Syndrome affects every individual differently. For some it is a mild annoyance; others it may be debilitating. Either way it's something that needs to be controlled. For natural treatment options see overleaf.

Ref: <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/ibs/>

Breast Cancer Morning Tea

We'd like to thank everyone who purchased something from our Breast Cancer morning tea. It was a successful morning which allowed us to donate a cheque to the Mater Hospital "Chicks In Pink" foundation.



Assiram Natural Therapies - 99 Creek St Brisbane 4000

Ph: (07) 3229 0115 Fax: (07) 3229 2145

www.assiram.com.au

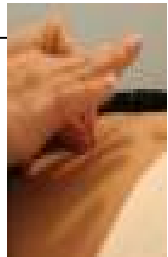
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Acupuncture and *Irritable Bowel Syndrome*



There are several types of treatments available for Irritable Bowel Syndrome. These usually include dietary and lifestyle changes and therapy to help with behavioural issues and stress management. One fantastic therapy option is acupuncture. Acupuncture can help to relieve all sorts of digestive problems including the symptoms of IBS.

The most common physical symptoms of IBS treated with acupuncture are:

- **Abdominal pain**
- **Muscle cramping**
- **Constipation**
- **Stomach pain / discomfort**
- **Bloating / gas**



A lot of people find themselves stressed or unhappy at certain times in their lives. For sufferers of IBS however, these moments can trigger their symptoms and they can suffer more because of it. Acupuncture has been deemed effective as a means of treating the emotional symptoms of IBS. One study directly investigated the comparison of acupuncture versus relaxation therapy for sufferers of IBS. Gastrointestinal symptoms were found to have improved in both groups, but when the patients were followed for a four week period

post-trial period, it was only in the acupuncture group that the pain reduction did persist.

A significant reduction in stress symptoms were also found in the acupuncture group. Such stress symptoms include:

- **Anxiety**
- **Insomnia**
- **Nervousness**
- **Pre-Menstrual Syndrome**

Regular exercise and an improved diet will also improve both the physical *and* emotional symptoms of IBS. For exercise, try something that you'll enjoy such as walking whilst listening to your favourite music, or playing a game of sport in the park with some friends. This way you'll get fit and have fun at the same time making you more motivated to do it again.

If you think you may be suffering from IBS, please see your local GP first to ensure the proper diagnosis has been made. Even though you may feel uncomfortable talking about your symptoms, the quicker you work out what is going on, the quicker you can begin to heal yourself. They are professionals and remember they've seen it many times before!

Ref: <http://www.helpforibs.com/footer/acupunct.asp>



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- Hot flushes
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- Menstrual cramps
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- Abdominal bloating
- Joint aches
- Fluid retention
- Breast tenderness
- Headache

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For more information, contact our clinic on (07) 3229 0115

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