

# IBS Irritable Bowel Syndrome



## What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)?

IBS is a functional disorder of the digestive system that does not have a specific structural or biochemical cause. It is sometimes referred to as spastic colon, mucous colitis, spastic colitis, nervous stomach, or irritable colon. Approximately 10–15% of Americans suffer with this disorder, and it is the most common diagnosis made by gastroenterologists. Patients experience a variety of symptoms, particularly abdominal discomfort and a change in bowel habits. Symptoms include constipation, diarrhea, alternating constipation and diarrhea, abdominal pain or cramping, a bloated feeling, gas (flatulence), and mucus in the stool.

## Who gets IBS and why?

The exact causes of IBS are not known. The walls of the intestines are lined with layers of muscle that contract and relax as they move food from the stomach through the intestinal tract to the rectum. However, people with IBS appear to have a disturbance in the interaction between the brain, the autonomic nervous system, and the musculature of the gut, resulting in too much or too little motility (movement of food). Several factors can trigger IBS, including stress; eating fatty, greasy or spicy foods; or drinking alcohol or caffeinated beverages.

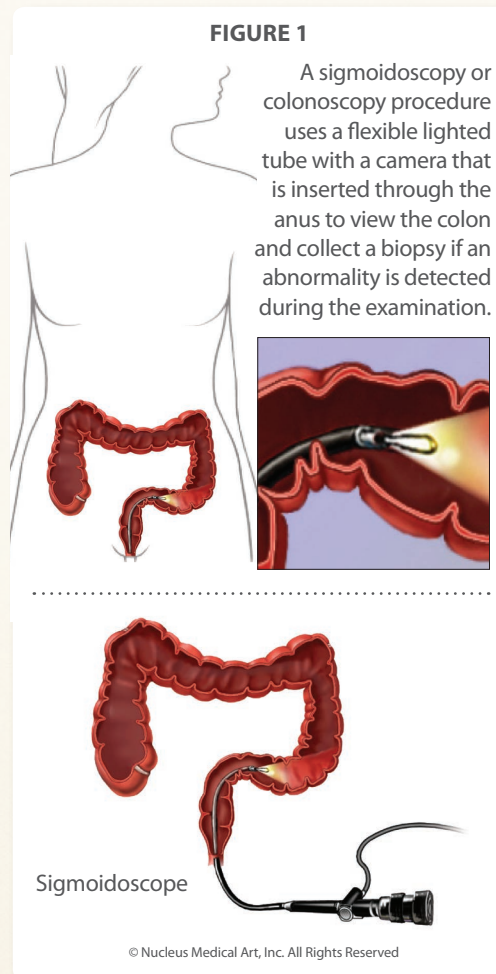
## How is IBS diagnosed in the lab?

A diagnosis of IBS is typically determined by first excluding other conditions. Healthcare providers look for certain signs, such as blood in the stool, evidence of infection, weight loss, or anemia, and may recommend several tests to help determine the cause of discomfort.

Blood tests can help exclude certain disorders, such as celiac disease (sprue), which is a sensitivity to the gluten protein that may cause symptoms similar to those of IBS.

Lactose intolerance tests can determine whether a patient lacks the lactase enzyme, which helps digest the sugar in dairy foods (lactose). Lacking this enzyme can cause gastrointestinal issues that mimic IBS.

A flexible sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy procedure can be done to examine the colon with a flexible lighted tube (Figure 1). The healthcare provider can remove (biopsy) tissue from the lining of the patient's bowel for the purpose of excluding disorders that can be detected microscopically.



The biopsy will be sent to a lab, where the tissue is processed into thin sections that are prepared on glass slides and examined under the microscope by a pathologist, a doctor specializing in the diagnosis of disease.

At Inform Diagnostics, all of the pathologists are subspecialists, such as GI pathologists for conditions of the digestive system. Difficult and unusual cases are reviewed together at a large multi-headed microscope to ensure the most accurate and definitive diagnoses. The pathologist creates a pathology report with all the important findings, including critical information to help guide treatment and assess prognosis, which is sent back to the patient's healthcare provider.

# IBS Irritable Bowel Syndrome



## How is IBS treated?

The goal of treatment is to eliminate the uncomfortable symptoms of IBS. A fiber supplement that promotes more regular bowel movements can be beneficial for patients experiencing constipation. If the patient is suffering from diarrhea, the addition of fiber soaks up extra fluid in the intestines and slows down the movements.

Over-the-counter medications to control diarrhea also may be beneficial. Anti-spasmodic medication is helpful for patients enduring frequent abdominal cramping. Significant bloating and gas may be improved by eliminating high gas-causing foods, such as legumes, raw fruits and vegetables, and carbonated beverages. If symptoms include pain and depression, additional treatment using selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI) can help relieve both emotional and intestinal symptoms.

Additionally, healthy practices such as eating at regular times and drinking plenty of liquids can help minimize or eliminate IBS symptoms, as can stress-reduction techniques, such as regular exercise, massage, and meditation.

There is no known cure for IBS, and patients will experience alternating periods of increased and decreased symptoms. The key is to try and manage the symptoms and reduce stress. Keeping a diary of symptoms, daily diet, and stress level can provide a pattern for recognizing the types of foods and stressful events that trigger the condition.

## Learn more!

[IBSgroup.org](http://IBSgroup.org)

The first and largest online community specifically for people who suffer from Irritable Bowel Syndrome and digestive health issues, this patient-led organization provides useful articles, forums, links, and more.

[TheIBSnetwork.org](http://TheIBSnetwork.org)

Based in the UK, this charitable organization provides information, advice, and support for people with IBS and those who care for them.

[HealingDigestiveDisorders.org](http://HealingDigestiveDisorders.org)

This online resource provides information on the treatment of digestive disorders and explores newer theories related to the cause and treatment of IBS and other gastrointestinal conditions.

This material is intended for patient education and information only. It does not constitute advice, nor should it be taken to suggest or replace professional medical care from your healthcare provider. Your treatment options may vary, depending upon medical history and current condition. Only your healthcare provider and you can determine your best option.

Provided as a service by Inform Diagnostics. © 2018 Inform Diagnostics, Inc. All rights reserved. GI0034 7.18



Headquartered in Irving, Texas, **Inform Diagnostics** is a premier national provider of the highest-quality anatomic pathology services, primarily in the fields of breast pathology, dermatopathology, hematopathology, gastrointestinal pathology, and urologic pathology. The company's pathologists—all fellowship-trained subspecialists—utilize state-of-the-art laboratories.



Inform Diagnostics continuously improves diagnostic precision through a unique consensus approach, rigorous quality assurance, comprehensive expertise, ongoing education and research, and close relationships with clinician clients.



Find more patient information and resources on our website at [www.InformDiagnostics.com](http://www.InformDiagnostics.com).