

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

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Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common and chronic disorder. The 27th edition of Dorland's Medical Dictionary defines it as a chronic non-inflammatory disorder characterized by abdominal pain and altered bowel habits ranging from diarrhea to constipation. There is no detectable pathological change with IBS. This condition is often referred to as Spastic Colon or Spastic Irritable Bowel. Painless diarrhea or constipation may also be referred to as Irritable Bowel.

It is estimated that 10 to 20 percent of the adult population is afflicted with IBS in some form and degree. The percentage is probably much higher because the symptoms are mild and often go untreated. Proper diagnosis and treatment are important because continued irritation of the bowel is a progressive condition that may lead to diverticulosis, ulceration of the bowel, and ultimately result in surgery. About 23,000 colostomies are inserted in this country annually. The difference between Crohn's disease and Ulcerative Colitis is that Crohn's is considered to be a chronic inflammatory condition of a section of the bowel wall, while Ulcerative Colitis adds ulceration of the wall in addition to chronic inflammation. Early recognition is important to relieve symptoms and to decrease the absorption of food that is associated with an irritable bowel, which may lead to weakness, anemia, and malnutrition (weight loss) as well as produce associated conditions such as gallstones, kidney stones and arthritis.

The cause of this insidious problem is the presence of inadequately digested sugars that remain in the bowel attracting water and resulting in diarrhea. Both lactose (dairy) and maltose (grains) are sugars that attract water, which results in severe distention and pain. One way to halt symptoms associated with IBS is to reduce the amount of sugar that is consumed in the diet. This includes dairy products and grains, as well as white sugar and flour. In order to get the best results, you should also supplement the appropriate food enzymes. Normally, bacteria in the large intestine digests sugars that were not completely digested in the small intestine. This results in a large amount of gas formation. Gas and toxins are absorbed into the blood, detoxified in the liver and discarded in the urine. The gases are not readily absorbed into the blood and are expelled rectally. These irritants affect the bowel and produce an inflammatory response that can cause bleeding and excess mucous formation.

The consumer market has recently been flooded with lactose-digesting enzyme products. Manufacturers suggest that with their product, everyone can enjoy all of the ice cream and dairy products that they want. This is simply not true because of the complexity of the digestive system. They may help, but because they address only lactose, they do not solve the whole problem. In order to solve this problem, we must be conscious of our diet and use the appropriate enzyme supplements that focus on improving digestion rather than targeting one specific digestive problem.