



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can cause significant digestive issues, so it's important to understand the condition so you can take control of your symptoms. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Constipation	When stools are hard and become difficult to pass, it could be constipation. Some people also experience bloating and discomfort. Most people deal with constipation a few times a year but people with IBS may have constipation that becomes chronic. In some cases, lifestyle changes such as drinking more water and exercising may help alleviate constipation.
Diarrhea	When bowel movements are occurring more than three times a day and are watery, it is diarrhea. Diarrhea can occur from many different causes, but people with IBS may experience diarrhea that is chronic and lasts longer than a few days. Making some changes to diet and lifestyle may help alleviate diarrhea in some cases.
Colon, or Large Intestine	The last part of the intestinal tract and is the organ that absorbs water from stool and turns it from liquid to solid before it is passed out of the body through the anus. The large intestine is affected by symptoms of IBS, which may include pain, bloating, and constipation and/or diarrhea.
IBS-C	The form of IBS that is associated primarily with constipation.
IBS-D	The form of IBS that is associated primarily with diarrhea.
IBS-A	IBS that can alternate between having constipation and having diarrhea.
Gastroenterologist	A specialist internal medicine physician who treats disorders of the digestive tract, such as IBS.
Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (FGDs)	Conditions of the digestive system that are diagnosed based on symptoms. With FGDs, such as IBS, no evidence of disease shows up on standard tests.
Biofeedback	A technique that is used to learn to control body functions, such as the urgent need to go to the bathroom.
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	A type of short-term therapy that is used to focus on coping with a particular problem or situation, such as digestive issues.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your IBS.

About Symptoms

- What are the expected symptoms for the form of IBS that I have?
- What should I do if I have symptoms that I think are associated with IBS but are new or different to me?
- Are there any red flag symptoms that should prompt me to seek medical care right away?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- What are some examples of reasons why my IBS might flare-up or worsen for a time?
- When should I follow up with you about my symptoms and my treatment plan?
- Does having IBS increase my risk of developing any other conditions?

About Diagnosis

- What form of IBS do I have?
- Have we done the tests or evaluations needed to rule out a cause other than IBS for my symptoms?

About Treatment

- Are there any over-the-counter medications (such as fiber supplements) that I should consider, and if so, which type?
- How long after starting treatment can I expect to have fewer symptoms of IBS?
- Are there any prescription medications that would help with IBS symptoms and what might be some of the common side effects?
- Are there any complementary or alternative therapies that have been shown to help for my form of IBS?

About Coping

- Are there any stress relief tactics (such as relaxation therapy or meditation) that have been shown to help with the symptoms of IBS?
