

# What is IBS-D?



## IBS-D is a type of **irritable bowel syndrome**

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common intestinal disease associated with unpredictable bowel movements that can change the way people with IBS live their life.

In people with IBS, the lower digestive system doesn't work quite right, even though there may not be an obvious medical problem. People with IBS have stomach (abdominal) pain at least 1 day a week, for at least 3 months.

## Types of IBS

In addition to stomach pain, people with IBS experience changes in how often they pass stools and how the stool is formed (or its consistency). There are certain changes in bowel movements that are associated with the 4 different types of IBS:

### **IBS-D**

An estimated 16 million people suffer from IBS with **diarrhea**

### **IBS-C**

An estimated 13 million people suffer from IBS with **constipation**

### **IBS-M**

**Mixed symptoms** of both diarrhea and constipation

### **IBS-U**

Bowel changes that cannot be placed into 1 of the other 3 groups (**unclassified**)

# What are the symptoms of IBS-D?

Symptoms can be different in everyone with IBS-D, but the most common are:

**stomach\* pain, stomach\* cramps, frequent diarrhea, gas, bloating, urgency**

\*Lower abdominal pain.



If you are struggling with symptoms of IBS-D, **you are not alone**. According to a survey called **IBS in America**, many people with IBS experience issues like:

- Feeling frustrated, exhausted, and embarrassed
- Missing out on activities because of pain
- Avoiding situations where there is no bathroom nearby
- Dealing with symptoms that are unpredictable, disappear and return unexpectedly, or change over time

## How is IBS-D diagnosed?

Healthcare providers can now diagnose IBS-D based on your symptom history, which means medical tests typically aren't needed. **If signs pointing to other possible causes** are ruled out, your healthcare provider may ask:

- Has your stomach pain been bothering you for an average of at least 1 day every week for the last 3 months?
- Are more than 25% of your stools/bowel movements loose or watery (diarrhea) and are less than 25% hard or lumpy (constipation)?
- Did your symptoms start at least 6 months ago?

## Did you know?



- About 1 in every 10 Americans has IBS
- Approximately 40% of people with IBS have IBS-D
- IBS-D affects both men and women almost equally
- Currently, there is no cure for IBS, but there are treatments that can help relieve symptoms

# What *causes* IBS-D?



## IBS-D is a **complicated condition**

Several factors can affect the digestive system, but the exact cause of IBS-D is unknown. People may have IBS-D for more than 1 reason, and those reasons can be different for every person. Abdominal pain, diarrhea, gas, or other symptoms of IBS-D, could be a result of 1 or more possible causes:

### Imbalances in the gut microbiota

Some studies suggest that an imbalance in the usual numbers and proportions of normal healthy bacteria in the digestive system may be found in people with IBS-D. Your digestive system has trillions of bacteria and microorganisms, collectively called the microbiota, that are constantly working to keep your body functioning normally.



The microbiota help you digest and absorb food and work with your immune system as a barrier against other microorganisms that can cause disease. A study of over 100 people with IBS showed that 73% of people with IBS had an imbalance in their gut microbiota, compared with only 16% of healthy people. An imbalance in the microbiota can be related to genetics, infection or disease, anxiety, diet, drug use, and other causes.



### **Communication problems** between the brain and the digestive system

There is a 2-way communication system between the brain and the digestive system, known as the gut-brain axis.

Normally, signals go back and forth between the brain and the digestive system to help your brain and body know when you have eaten enough, when to start digesting food, and when to have bowel movements.

Changes in these signals can cause problems on either the digestive or brain side, which may lead to stress, anxiety, depression, or symptoms such as pain or diarrhea.

# What *causes* IBS-D?

## Problems in the immune system

Activation of the immune system can cause inflammation that might result in symptoms of IBS-D.

Your immune system is your body's defense against disease. But if your immune system takes action in your digestive system—maybe because of an infection or stress—the lining of the digestive tract can become irritated and inflamed, causing pain and diarrhea.



## Family history (genetics and early childhood)

Certain genes associated with the immune system, inflammation, digestion, and psychiatric disease may be linked to IBS. Factors such as substantial stress experienced in early childhood could also play a role.

People with family members who have IBS are more than twice as likely to develop IBS themselves.

## Anxiety and/or depression

Many people with IBS-D feel depressed or anxious, but it can be difficult to determine if these feelings are a cause or a result of IBS-D.

Some factors associated with IBS-D can cause depression, anxiety, or other mood disorders. While other studies show that stress may cause changes in the gut microbiota and contribute to the symptoms of IBS-D.





# Living with IBS-D



## Life can change when you have IBS-D

Not everyone may understand how challenging life can be when you are living with IBS-D. People with IBS or IBS-D cope with their disease in a variety of ways.

### People living with IBS-D may...



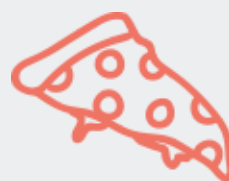
Limit or cancel social engagements



Stay home from work or school



Avoid long car rides, plane rides, or going on vacation



Avoid favorite foods or have limited options when eating in restaurants



Constantly worry about access to a bathroom

### Tips for everyday life with IBS-D

Depending on what triggers your symptoms or what the underlying causes might be, there are some lifestyle changes that could help.



Try getting regular exercise or practicing meditation or other stress-reducing techniques



Keep a detailed journal of all of your symptoms



Eliminate trigger foods from your diet, such as foods that cause gas or contain gluten



Stay educated about IBS-D and talk openly with your family, friends, and healthcare providers. It takes guts, but you can do it!



Join local or online support groups. There's strength in numbers, after all.

# Living with IBS-D



## Questions for your next visit

Talking to your doctor about your symptoms isn't always easy. Use the questions below to help you start the discussion. And be sure to ask about other treatment options you may not have tried.



- What might be causing my IBS-D symptoms?
- What information would be helpful for you to know when I keep a journal about my symptoms?
- Can changing my diet and exercising regularly help my symptoms?
- What if lifestyle changes and over-the-counter medications haven't worked?
- What prescription medications are available for IBS-D?
- How long do I have to take a prescription medication and when will it start to work?
- Are there other options I should know about?
- When should I schedule a follow-up appointment?



## Choosing the Right Treatment Option

If your lifestyle changes or your medication hasn't helped, ask your healthcare provider what else you could try. There are different types of prescription treatments for IBS-D, so if one isn't working, be sure to ask about trying something else.

**Talk to your healthcare provider about your symptoms to help decide which treatment option is right for you.**