

# **BLOCK & NATION, P.A.**

## **FAMILY PRACTICE**

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## **IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME**

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (also known as IBS) is the most common digestive tract disorder. Other names used to describe this include Irritable Colon, Spastic Colon, and Spastic Colitis. IBS is a functional disorder of the intestine. This means there is no sign of disease in the intestine but that the intestine does not always function normally, especially in stressful situations. Symptoms include abdominal pain, cramping, bloating, altered bowel habits, constipation, diarrhea, or constipation alternating with diarrhea. Mucus is frequently mixed with the stool as well.

IBS often starts in adolescence, but can start during adulthood and people may suffer symptoms chronically or just have acute attacks from time to time. The symptoms are usually associated with emotional stress or with dietary habits. Many of the symptoms are created by changes in the normal motility (movement) of the intestine. In IBS, the muscle of the intestine contracts abnormally, causing discomfort; symptoms include: cramping or abdominal pain due to muscle spasm, constipation from delayed passage of stool by spasm or inactivity of the bowel, or diarrhea from such rapid passage of the intestinal contents through the colon that water cannot be absorbed out of the stool and back into the body. Other common symptoms of IBS are associated with gas formed in the intestine during the digestion of some foods. This gas can become trapped by muscle spasms and may cause bloating and cramping from the pressure within the intestine.

There are multiple components to treatment of Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Each person should try to reduce their stress in their life as much as possible; sometimes relaxation techniques or counseling sessions are helpful. Dietary changes to improve each person's particular symptoms are very important as well. Individuals should avoid foods that act as irritants or that produce gas, diarrhea, or constipation, depending on one's symptoms. Dietary changes can improve many symptoms dramatically. For people that suffer from constipation, chemical laxatives should be avoided because prolonged use can lead to laxative dependency and the bowel can lose its normal muscle tone and functional abilities. For constipating symptoms, fiber is very important. Fiber helps promote bulk and moisture of the stool and helps to move the stool through the intestine. FIBER SUPPLEMENTS, such as Fibercon pills or Metamucil powder or wafers, or Citracel powder once or twice a day, play a significant role in treatment of constipating symptoms. Exercise can also be therapeutic for some people, especially with constipation.

A list is provided on the back of this page which categorizes foods by the symptoms they produce. **AVOIDANCE OF THE FOODS RELATED TO YOUR SYMPTOMS IS A MAJOR PART OF YOUR THERAPY.**

Many IBS patients also have a lactose (or dairy) intolerance. The symptoms are very similar and **A TRIAL EITHER OFF DAIRY PRODUCTS OR USING LACTASE PRODUCTS** can be very helpful. Lactase tablets, such as Lactrase, provide an oral enzyme in order to digest dairy products better; a trial with this or using Lact-Aid milk is worthwhile and may alleviate some symptoms.

Other medications include anti-spasmodics which relax the intestine and help restore normal intestinal motility. These anti-spasmodics are available by prescription and can relieve cramping, bloating, diarrhea, and constipation. Other medications to treat associated problems, such as anti-anxiety agents for stress, are sometimes used as well. In cases of excessive diarrhea, we recommend anti-diarrheal medication such as **IMODIUM**. If you tend to have frequent bloating, cramping, or increased gas, then try using **BEANO** enzyme in a tablet or powder (over the counter) with your vegetables in order to help digest them better.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome is not life-threatening and does not lead to other serious disease. It can be treated successfully in order to resume normal lifestyle and dietary habits. As long as no serious disease is suspected or found on testing, the medications for IBS are effective and safe for long-term use.

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Revised: 12/27/07

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**POSSIBLE PROBLEM FOOD LIST**

**CONSTIPATING**

Meats in casings  
Boiled Milk  
Dried Fruits  
Chocolate  
Nuts  
Corn  
Celery  
Raisins  
Grated Coconut  
Chinese Food  
Popcorn  
Whole Grains  
Foods with Seeds or Kernels  
Coleslaw

**DIARRHEA PRODUCING**

Citrus fruits  
Raw Fruits with Skins  
Raw Vegetables  
Spinach  
Beans  
Figs  
Prunes  
Hot Condiments  
Fresh Milk  
Beer, Alcoholic Beverages  
Highly Seasoned Foods  
Caffeine Products

**GAS PRODUCING**

Dairy Products  
Fresh Yeast or Sourdough Bread  
Dried Beans  
Cabbage  
Broccoli  
Cauliflower  
Onions  
Beer  
Carbonated Drinks  
Mushrooms  
Cucumbers  
Brussel Sprouts  
Radishes  
Peas  
Corn  
Spinach

**IRRITATING**

Hot Spices  
Citrus Fruit Juices  
Alcohol  
Caffeine