

# Irritable Bowel Syndrome: After Your Visit

## Your Care Instructions

Irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, is a problem with the intestines that causes belly pain, bloating, gas, constipation, and diarrhea. The cause of IBS is not well known. IBS can last for many years, but it does not get worse over time or lead to serious disease.

Most people can control their symptoms by changing their diet and reducing stress.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

- For constipation:
  - Include fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains in your diet each day. These foods are high in fiber.
  - Drink plenty of fluids, enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.
  - Get some exercise every day. Build up slowly to 30 to 60 minutes a day on 5 or more days of the week.
  - Take a fiber supplement, such as Citrucel or Metamucil, every day if needed. Start with a small dose and very slowly increase the dose over a month or more.
  - Schedule time each day for a bowel movement. Having a daily routine may help. Take your time and do not strain when having a bowel movement.
- If you often have diarrhea, limit foods and drinks that make it worse. These are different for each person but may include caffeine (found in coffee, tea, chocolate, and cola drinks), alcohol, fatty foods, gas-producing foods (such as beans, cabbage, and broccoli), some dairy products, and spicy foods. Do not eat candy or gum that contains sorbitol.
- Keep a daily diary of what you eat and what symptoms you have. This may help find foods that cause you problems.
- Eat slowly. Try to make mealtime relaxing.
- Find ways to reduce stress.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Exercise can help reduce tension and prevent constipation. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.

## When should you call for help?

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your pain is different than usual or occurs with fever.
- You lose weight without trying, or you lose your appetite and you do not know why.
- Your symptoms often wake you from sleep.
- Your stools are black and tarlike or have streaks of blood.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your IBS symptoms get worse or begin to disrupt your day-to-day life.
- You become more tired than usual.

- Your home treatment stops working.

## **Where can you learn more?**

Go to [www.southdenvergi.com](http://www.southdenvergi.com), log into the web portal, and enter Y447 in the search box to learn more about Irritable Bowel Syndrome: After Your Visit.

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