

Irritable bowel syndrome patients found to suffer higher rates of fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome

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Researchers at the University of Missouri School of Medicine have uncovered a link between irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and somatic

disorders, such as fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome.

IBS is a disorder of the stomach and intestines affecting up to 15% of the population. It causes cramping, [abdominal pain](#), bloating, gas, and diarrhea. [The study](#), published in *Biomedicine*, looked at more than 1.2 million IBS patient hospitalizations from 4,000 U.S. hospitals over a three-year period and found that patients with IBS were five times more likely to have [fibromyalgia](#), a chronic musculoskeletal pain disorder, compared to the general adult population without IBS.

Similarly, IBS patients had significantly higher odds of having chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), a disease that causes severe fatigue, cognitive dysfunction and sleep disturbances, when compared to the population without IBS.

"Because IBS patients have higher prevalence of somatic comorbidities such as fibromyalgia and [chronic fatigue syndrome](#), identifying and treating these disorders can improve their quality of life," said lead researcher Zahid Ijaz Tarar, MD, a fellow in the division of gastroenterology and hepatology at the University of Missouri School of Medicine. "Earlier identification of comorbidities is valuable to inform treatment strategies, including consulting other specialties such as rheumatology and psychiatry to improve the overall health outcomes in IBS patients."

These findings build on previous research that established a link between IBS and [mental health challenges](#), such as anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation.

The high incidence of these bodily ailments following IBS brought upon by gastrointestinal infections, and the resulting use of antibiotics, has led researchers to theorize that an imbalance of gut bacteria and a gut that allows toxins to leak into the bloodstream may play a role in their

development.

"This is yet another example where ailments in the gut are linked to ailments elsewhere in the body and mind," said senior author Yezaz Ghouri, MD, assistant professor of clinical medicine and gastroenterology. "As we continue to learn more about how gut health affects health elsewhere it is important that clinicians look for and manage somatic comorbidities in IBS patients."

More information: Zahid Ijaz Tarar et al, Prevalence of Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome among Individuals with Irritable Bowel Syndrome: An Analysis of United States National Inpatient Sample Database, *Biomedicines* (2023). [DOI: 10.3390/biomedicines11102594](https://doi.org/10.3390/biomedicines11102594)

Provided by University of Missouri

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