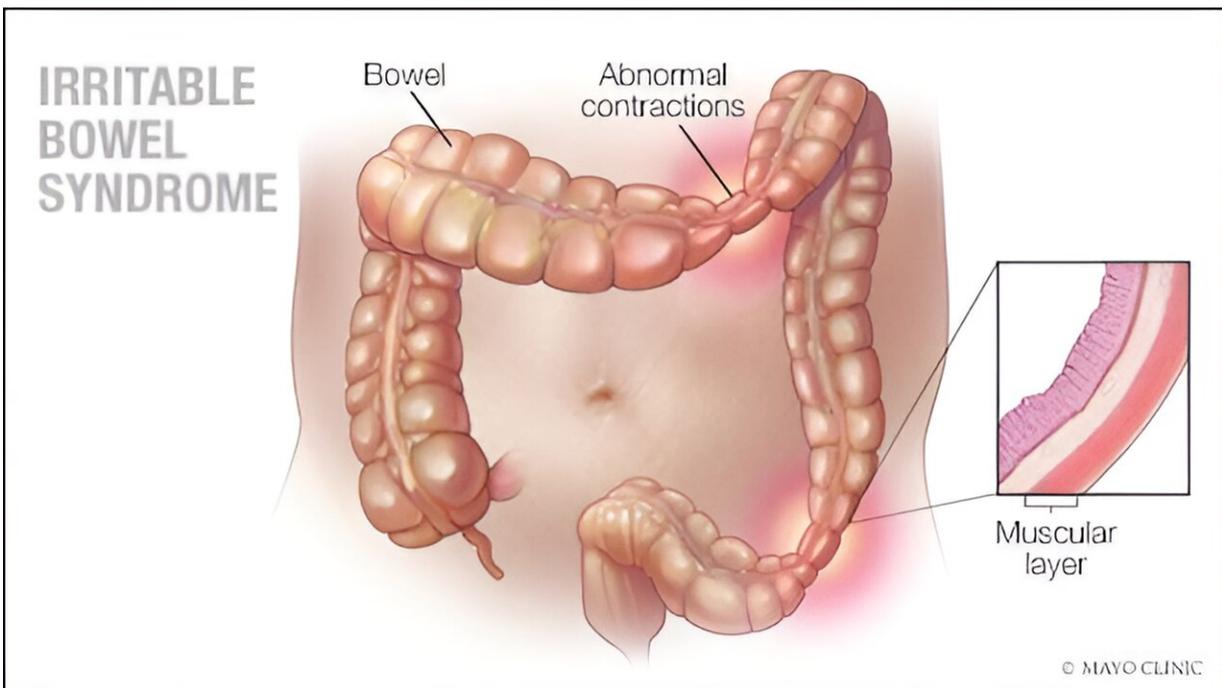


Video: How to cope with irritable bowel syndrome

April 19 2024, by Sonya Goins



Credit: Mayo Clinic

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can significantly disrupt a person's daily life. Some people suffer in silence because of painful stomach cramps, diarrhea, and constipation. These symptoms can significantly affect a person's quality of life.

April 19 is World IBS Day, intended to raise awareness about IBS,

which affects the stomach and intestines, also called the gastrointestinal tract.

"Irritable bowel syndrome is a common disorder in the United States, affecting approximately 10% of U.S. adults," says Dr. Brian Lacy, a Mayo Clinic gastroenterologist.

The symptoms of IBS are sometimes embarrassing and can affect a person's physical and emotional well-being.

"Patients have symptoms of disordered defecation. And that, in some patients, means constipation, skipping days without a bowel movement, straining of a [bowel movement](#), or diarrhea, loose, watery urgent bowel movements," says Dr. Lacy.

The exact cause of IBS is still unclear, but it's believed to be a combination of factors, including changes in the [gut microbiome](#) and food intolerances.

IBS is now categorized as a disorder of gut-brain interaction, which means there is a problem with how the gut and the brain communicate with each other.

"That stress, which can affect the brain, then sends signals to the gut, changing gut function and worsening your IBS symptoms," says Dr. Lacy.

There is no cure for IBS, but symptoms can be managed. Try eating smaller, more frequent meals and exercising regularly. Deep breathing and yoga are also helpful in reducing stress.

When to see a doctor for irritable bowel syndrome

See your health care professional if you have significant changes in bowel habits. Some [severe symptoms](#) include:

- Bloody stools.
- Unintended weight loss.
- Unexplained vomiting.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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