

# APRIL IS NATIONAL IBS AWARENESS MONTH



*By Dana M. Brandt, LMT*

## What Is IBS

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a chronic disorder of the large intestine that causes pain, cramping and abdominal distress. The walls of your large intestine are lined with concentric rings of smooth muscle that contract to help move waste through the body. Approximately 1 in 5 Americans report symptoms of IBS, of which 35-40% are men, and 60-65% are women. It continues to be one of the most common disorders seen by physicians.

## Signs and Symptoms

- Cramping and pain in the abdominal area that is relieved after a bowel movement
- Periods of diarrhea or constipation
- Change in stool frequency or consistency
- Feeling gassy or bloated, potentially with abdominal distension
- Observing mucus in your stool

## Recommendations

I know how debilitating IBS can be. I have suffered from gastrointestinal issues for several years. The best things I have found that have really helped are changing my diet and limiting my stress. There is no generalized diet that works for everyone, so please consult your physician before following any of the recommendations below.

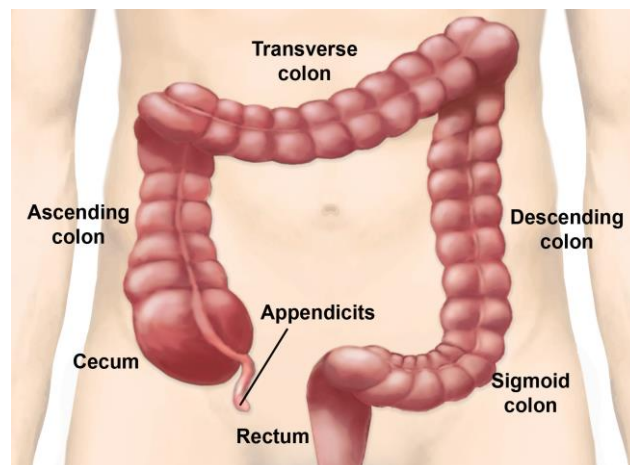
- Avoid eating large meals. Eat smaller meals more frequently. Instead of using a large plate, use a smaller one. This will trick your mind into thinking you are eating the same amount of food.

- Eat slowly and chew your food. Digestion starts in the mouth with the help of enzymes produced by your salivary glands. Amylase breaks down carbohydrates, while lipase breaks down fats.
- Don't feel inclined to eat everything on your plate. Just because you see it, doesn't mean you have to eat it. This is especially important when you eat out.
- Eliminate all grains from your diet (e.g. wheat, barley, rye, rice, couscous, millet, buckwheat, oats, flaxseed and quinoa). These are known to cause gastrointestinal inflammation.
- Eliminate all dairy from your diet (grass-fed butter or ghee is okay).
- Eliminate or limit nightshades (e.g. eggplant, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, goji berries, and tobacco). These can trigger inflammatory responses within your body.
- Limit the amount of phytate-rich foods that you consume (e.g. nuts, seeds, beans), as the phytic acid actually inhibits the enzymes needed to break down food. If you do eat them, make sure that they are properly cooked or sprouted/ soaked.
- Add a cup or two of peppermint tea to your daily routine. My favorite is by Traditional Medicinals.
- Make time for yourself during the day to concentrate on your breathing. Avoid breathing into your chest. Instead, take full, deep breaths by letting your abdomen protrude outwards while inhaling deeply. This is wonderful because it helps reduce stress we experience throughout the day. By breathing deeply, your diaphragm is also massaging your large intestine.

### Massage for IBS

Massage is very beneficial for IBS sufferers. Doing daily abdominal self-massage has really helped me. Granted, doing it yourself isn't nearly as effective as having a trained massage therapist do it for you. But you were given two hands, so I encourage you to massage away!

My favorite way to massage my abdomen is by applying 3-4 drops of peppermint essential oil in the palm of my hand, and then applying it to my abdomen in clockwise circles from the right side of my abdomen (ascending colon), across the top below my rib cage (transverse colon), and then down the left side (descending colon). Repeat this sequence multiple times.



I highly recommend using only Young Living Essential Oils when applied directly (neat) to the skin. Essential oils that you find in health food stores only contain 5% essential oil, while the other 95% are solvents used to extract the essential oils. These solvents may cause harmful reactions. Young Living Essential Oils are 100% Pure Therapeutic Grade, which means you could even take them internally. Remember to only put on your skin what you are willing to eat!