

# How can I help my child with IBS?

IBS can be embarrassing or even frightening to children, so it is important for parents to learn about IBS and help their child cope with symptoms.



## What is IBS?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a chronic disorder of the digestive system and is a common cause of recurrent abdominal pain in children. The specific cause of IBS is unknown but symptoms can be exacerbated by certain foods and stress.

## Symptoms

- Abdominal pain (can range from mild to severe)\*
- Altered bowel habits\*
- Constipation (hard stools that are difficult to pass)
- Diarrhea (loose or watery stools)
- Mucus in stools
- Bloating
- Belching
- Gas
- Heartburn
- Indigestion
- Nausea and/or vomiting

\*at least once per week for two months



## Treatment

Children can develop IBS even if they are otherwise healthy. The most important part of IBS treatment is learning how to manage the symptoms.

## Diagnosis

IBS can be diagnosed in the doctor's office through a complete medical history and physical exam, with no laboratory testing needed.

## Making changes in diet and lifestyle

- Reassure your child that IBS is not life-threatening and help him/her avoid food and stress that may cause IBS symptoms.
- Avoid caffeine, carbonated drinks, and foods that cause gas.
- Increase the amount of fiber in diet.
- Keeping a food diary can help track which foods cause symptoms.



### If you need help from your doctor...

Medications and counseling are also available if changes in diet and lifestyle do not improve symptoms.