

Symptoms include

- Abdominal pain or discomfort for at least 12 weeks out of the previous 12 months. These 12 weeks do not have to be consecutive.
- The abdominal pain or discomfort has two of the following three features:
 - It is relieved by having a bowel movement.
 - When it starts, there is a change in how often you have a bowel movement.
 - When it starts, there is a change in the form of the stool or the way it looks.
- Certain symptoms must also be present, such as
 - a change in frequency of bowel movements
 - a change in appearance of bowel movements
 - feelings of uncontrollable urgency to have a bowel movement
 - difficulty or inability to pass stool
 - mucus in the stool
 - bloating
- Bleeding, fever, weight loss, and persistent severe pain are not symptoms of IBS and may indicate other problems such as inflammation, or rarely, cancer.

The following have been associated with a worsening of IBS symptoms

- large meals
- bloating from gas in the colon
- medicines
- wheat, rye, barley, chocolate, milk products, or alcohol
- drinks with caffeine, such as coffee, tea, or colas
- stress, conflict, or emotional upsets

Researchers have found that women with IBS may have more symptoms during their menstrual periods, suggesting that reproductive hormones can worsen IBS problems.

In addition, people with IBS frequently suffer from depression and anxiety, which can worsen symptoms. Similarly, the symptoms associated with IBS can cause a person to feel depressed and anxious.

----- Excerpt of a report about IBS from National Institutes of Health