

# Care Gram

## Irritable Bowel Syndrome

### **What Is Irritable Bowel Syndrome?**

Irritable bowel syndrome is a problem in which the colon does not contract normally. It contracts (spasms) in an erratic manner and can sometimes last for long periods of time. Irritable bowel syndrome most often is seen in people under 40 and often affects teenagers.

### **What Causes Irritable Bowel Syndrome?**

Irritable bowel syndrome tends to run in families, but does not lead to cancer. However, prolonged spasms of the colon may lead to diverticulosis, a disorder in which balloon-like pockets push out from the bowel wall.

### **What Are the Symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome?**

Symptoms may include:

- Constipation
- Bloating
- Large amounts of mucus with bowel movements
- Stomach discomfort
- Diarrhea

### **How Will I Know I Have Irritable Bowel Syndrome?**

First, your doctor will do a complete medical history. Certain medical tests also can help your doctor determine whether or not you have irritable bowel syndrome. Tests may include:

- Blood tests
- Stool exam
- Urine tests
- X-ray of the intestinal tract
- Sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy (a test which uses a lighted flexible tube to inspect parts of the bowel)

### **What Is the Treatment?**

- High roughage diet
- Adding bran to your diet
- Large amounts of fiber or fiber supplements
- Eating smaller, more frequent meals
- Medicine to relax the muscles in the wall of the colon
- Physical exercise
- Stress reduction



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**When Should I Contact the Doctor?**

Call your doctor if:

- Symptoms persist
- Your medicine does not relieve your discomfort
- You notice blood in your stool