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Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

IBS is a common disorder that may affect more than one-third of all Americans at some time during their lives. This condition has many names including spastic colon, nervous colitis or spastic colitis. It should not be confused with other conditions such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.

IBS is not a disease; rather it is a pattern of symptoms that tend to occur together. Abdominal pain, bloating with constipation, diarrhea or a combination of symptoms is the most common presentation. Rectal bleeding is not part of IBS and should be properly evaluated. There is not one cause of IBS. It is related to abnormal contraction of the intestines as well as air trapping. It is a functional disease, affected by many other conditions, for example emotional stress, changes in diet, hormonal changes, seasonal changes among others.

The treatment of IBS is first a correct diagnosis. A complete medical evaluation including screening for common conditions is important. Talk to your primary care physician and make sure to have a yearly physical exam.

Initial therapy consists in treating the predisposing factors. Dietary modifications, increase in water intake, a daily fiber supplement (Metamucil™, Hydrocil™, Benefiber™, or freshly ground golden flax seed in a large glass of water or juice), exercise and other stress-reducing methods may significantly improve the condition.

Excessive caffeine, alcohol and dairy products may worsen the symptoms. Be sure to have a balanced diet and work together with your doctor to find the diet that makes you feel better. Smoking significantly worsens IBS symptoms.

Patience is one of the most important things in dealing with IBS. Relief of symptoms is a slow process.

Please go to our website www.drisaac.net for more information. Look for patient education and instructions.