

Editorial for the month of October 2008

Homoeopathic Approach to Irritable Bowel Syndrome

What is irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)?

Irritable bowel syndrome* (IBS) is a "syndrome," meaning a group of symptoms. The most common symptoms of IBS are abdominal pain or discomfort often reported as cramping, bloating, gas, diarrhea, and/or constipation. IBS affects the colon, or large bowel, which is the part of the digestive tract that stores stool. IBS, is not a disease. It's a functional disorder, meaning that the bowel doesn't work, or function, correctly.

What causes IBS?

We are not sure what causes IBS. The nerves and muscles in the bowel appear to be extra sensitive in people with IBS. Muscles may contract too much when you eat. These contractions can cause cramping and diarrhea during or shortly after a meal. Or the nerves may react when the bowel stretches, causing cramping or pain.

IBS can be painful. But it does not damage the colon or other parts of the digestive system. IBS does not lead to other health problems.

What are the symptoms of IBS?

The main symptoms of IBS are

- abdominal pain or discomfort in the abdomen, often relieved by or associated with a bowel movement
- chronic diarrhea, constipation, or a combination of both

Other symptoms are

- whitish mucus in the stool
- a swollen or bloated abdomen
- the feeling that you have not finished a bowel movement

Women with IBS often have more symptoms during their menstrual periods.

How is IBS diagnosed?

The doctor may suspect that you have IBS because of your symptoms. Specific symptoms, called the Rome criteria, can be used to more accurately make this diagnosis. Medical tests may also be done to make sure

you don't have any other health problems that cause the same symptoms.

Medical Tests for IBS

In addition to a physical exam and blood tests, the following tests might be done to diagnose IBS:

- Lower_gastrointestinal (GI) series. This test uses x rays to diagnose problems in the large intestine. It is also called a barium enema x ray. Before you have the x ray, the doctor will put barium into your large intestine through the anus—the opening where stool leaves the body. Barium is a thick liquid that makes your intestines show up better on the x ray.
- Colonoscopy. For this test the doctor inserts a long, thin tube, called a colonoscope, into your anus and up into your colon. The tube has a light and tiny lens on the end. The doctor can view the inside of your colon on a big television screen. In some cases, a shorter tube, called a flexible sigmoidoscope, is used to look at just the lower portion of the colon.

How is IBS treated?

IBS has no cure in modern medicine, but with right homoeopathic treatment you can do things to relieve symptoms or sometimes cure the disease completely. Treatment may involve

- diet changes
- homoeopathic medicine
- stress relief

One may have to try a few things to see what works best for you.

Diet Changes

Some foods and drinks make IBS worse.

Foods and drinks that may cause or worsen symptoms include

- fatty foods, like french fries
- milk products, like cheese or ice cream
- chocolate
- alcohol
- caffeinated drinks, like coffee and some sodas
- carbonated drinks, like soda

These foods may make IBS worse.

To find out which foods is a problem, keep a diary that tracks

- what you eat during the day
- what symptoms you have
- when symptoms occur
- what foods always make you feel sick

Some foods make IBS better.

Fiber may reduce the constipation associated with IBS because it makes stool soft and easier to pass. However, some people with IBS who have more sensitive nerves may feel a bit more abdominal discomfort after adding more fiber to their diet. Fiber is found in foods such as breads, cereals, beans, fruits, and vegetables.

Examples of foods with fiber include

Fruits	Vegetables	Breads, cereals, and beans
apples peaches	broccoli (raw) cabbage carrots (raw)	kidney beans lima beans whole-

	peas	grain bread whole- grain cereal
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Add foods with fiber to your diet a little at a time to let your body get used to them. Too much fiber at once can cause gas, which can trigger symptoms in a person with IBS.

Eat small meals.

Large meals can cause cramping and diarrhea in people with IBS. If this happens to you, try eating four or five small meals a day instead of less-frequent big meals.

Does stress cause IBS?

Emotional stress does not cause IBS. But people with IBS may have their bowels react more to stress. So, if you already have IBS, stress can make your symptoms worse.

Stress Relief

Learning to reduce stress can help with IBS. With less stress, you may find you have less

cramping and pain. You may also find it easier to manage your symptoms.

Meditation, exercise, hypnosis, and counseling may help.

Homoeopathic Cases

Irritable Bowel Syndrome is one disease where most of the homoeopaths in the world would have a chance to give relief to the patient I shall be discussing some small remedies which has been extremely useful to me in my practice.

One such case I remember was of a person who was a known case of Irritable Bowel Syndrome for the last 25 years. He had taken many allopathic treatments but during later part of his illness he decided that he should take naturopathic or homoeopathic treatment. He consulted many homoeopaths in the past and later on he came to me for consultation. I took down his case and found that constitutionally he needs *Cocculus indicus*. This remedy helped him for a long period of time, but one day he traveled out of Bombay and went to Mahabaleshwar for vacation, during that period he suddenly experienced the

heaviness in the stomach after eating accompanied by loud eructations and nausea which was almost constant. He tried to skip his meal but the pain did not disappear. Gradually the problem extended to his lower abdomen where the lower abdomen became bloated, there was lot of cramps and rumbling sensation in the abdomen. He mentioned to me that before going to Mahabaleshwar his stool was on the loose side but in Mahabaleshwar he was severely constipated and one of the stools that he passed was in the shape of small ball and it was very scanty.

He phoned desperately to me in Bombay that he seeks my help. He said that this discomfort in my abdomen made me extremely restless and I am not enjoying my vacation in Mahabaleshwar. Is it possible that homoeopathy can help to remove this acute problem of mine? I studied his symptoms and I gave him *Viburnum opulus* 30 to be diluted in the water, 1 teaspoonful 3 hourly for 1 day.

The first few doses did not show much relief but the 3rd and the 4th dose onwards he started gradually feeling better. He passed the normal stool and along with that he passed lot of flatulence after which all his complains disappeared, especially his agonizing nausea,

heaviness in the stomach and heaviness in the lower bowel. His abdomen felt very light.

Subsequent to that I use *Viburnum opulus* quite a lot in my practice especially where there is crampy and colicky pain. It could be in the newborn, it could be in the infant, it could be in the child or adult but there has to be a peculiar symptom of this particular remedy.

The crampy pain in the abdomen is always associated with distension and rumbling. This is very important criteria that I have found out and the person tends to be more constipated than having diarrhoea and another very important thing is constant nausea.

Even though it's a purely female remedy used by many homoeopaths for dysmenorrhoea but one cannot ignore its role in spasmodic affection of the intestine especially the lower bowel in cases Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

Similarly I had another case of Irritable Bowel Syndrome who was a bank executive and who was under my care for last 5 years treated very successfully with *Lycopodium*. One fine day he traveled to United Kingdom for a business meeting and there he attended a party, he ate the food that was served in the

party and then next morning when he woke up he had an extremely upset stomach. He had severe flatulence, gaseous distension, this flatulence was pressing his stomach and he was becoming more and more anxious. The distension was extremely painful. There was severe cramping pain in the abdomen and he could not even wear his pant around his waist because even the touch of clothes will aggravate his discomfort in the abdomen. Even a glass of water if he tries to drink will invite the cramp or even a slightest motion; slightest jar will aggravate the pain. Even though he was thirsty but he could not drink only because of the cramps. Another problem was the tightness in the abdomen and the type of on going severe anxiety along with his stomach problem.

I first prescribed him Bryonia 1M in a diluted dose which he took 3-4 but again in the evening he phoned me in India and said he is not at all better. I took down his symptoms once again and tried to understand his problem and this time I land up giving him Opium 200, again after few doses there was no relief. In his 3rd telephone call he was desperate and he said that it is better to die than to suffer from this type of severe discomfort and the agony of distension as I am not able to move or wear

my clothes, or drink a drop of water. This was the time when I prescribed him Raphanus 10M. Allen's encyclopedia mentions the beautiful proving of the crucifereae plant Raphanus Sativus where he gives lot of cases of poisoning of a woman or of small children who accidentally ate this radish and suffered from the similar symptoms which this patient was suffering from.

Raphanus as you know is an excellent remedy for distension of stomach like Lycopodium or it has a symptom suggests you intestinal obstruction where you may also think of Opium. The peculiarity of Raphanus colic is that the affected part which goes into spasm will become hard and there are pockets of winds that get obstructed within the abdomen. During the colic the person may become flushed but not as flushed as you see in Opium and there is not enough amount of eructation that you see in Lycopodium.

Lycopodium eructates quite a lot Raphanus does not in comparison and the typical feeling that they are not able to remove the wind or the flatus either from the top or from the bottom and the pain makes the person twist and bend and take awkward position so as that he can pass flatus, this pain is usually

associated with great deal of nausea. There is a marked thirst but the spasm of the pain gets much aggravated by drinking. Sometime the patient describes the tightness feeling in the abdomen as if an iron band is tide around the waist. These are the indications which I have chiefly confirmed in my practice of Raphanus Sativus.

Another case I remember of a premenopausal lady who had symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome with chronic amoebic dysentery. She was a known case of Graphites and she was responding very positively to the prescription but once during the festival of Dusera she indulged in an outside food and she came home with quite a sick feeling. She had dyspepsia with distension of the stomach and gradually she developed a cramp with distension of the abdomen which was followed by loose motion and the stools were quite watery, frothy and lot of mucus passed in the stool. She complained to me that there is an excessive rumbling in her abdomen and this distension, rumbling and cramps were much better if she passes little flatus or she flexes the limb in her abdomen. Sometime it's a discomfort in her abdomen made her to bend double. She was thirsty but she was afraid to drink the water as she felt if she drinks water

her complains may become worse. She took some digene to relieve her problem but even after drinking two tablespoonful of digene every few hours did not help so ultimately she phoned me at 10 o' clock in the night and seeked my help if homoeopathy can help her. I gave her Carbo-veg but even after taking in 1M potency few doses she did not respond to Carbo-veg.

I gave lot of importance to the bending double, passing the flatus ameliorates but I did not give importance to the type of stool and hence she did not improve. Subsequently I gave Gratiola 200 and I asked her to take one teaspoonful to be diluted in water every 2 hourly, with in few doses she responded very beautifully to the medicine.

Gratiola I have used a lot in cases of diarrhoea and acute episode of ulcerative colitis whether the stools are yellowish, gushing or watery. You can compare this gushing of water like water gushing from the hydrant. Usually they have diarrhoea after drinking water when it's a cold or it's a room temperature and you may mistake Gratiola sometimes with Croton-tig or Elaterium or Podophyllum or any other diarrhoea remedy.

Mentally the Gratiola patients are peevish and ill humored. Many authors have described Gratiola as a replica of Nux vomica in female. However I have not given much importance to this kind of observation.

Material Medica mentions the green diarrhoea but I have hardly seen green diarrhoea in Gratiola rather my prescribing totality has always been the forcible stool; the stool comes like a force from a hydrant and the stool that is quite frothy. Drinking water is of sure sign of an aggravation factor in almost all cases of Gratiola that I have treated successfully.

Thank you.