

## Finding Relief Beyond a ‘Process of Elimination’

Focus on Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common gastrointestinal disorder (sometimes referred to as “spastic colon”) that primarily affects women under the age of 45. Its cause is unknown, and it is considered a chronic functional condition that affects the large intestine (colon) and causes discomfort or pain, but does not necessarily harm the intestines.

The signs and symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome can vary widely and often resemble those of other diseases. Among the most common are:

- abdominal pain or cramps
- bloating
- diarrhea
- constipation
- mucus in the stool

The severity and frequency of these symptoms also varies widely. Some people can control their symptoms by managing diet, lifestyle, and stress, while others require medication.

Because there are usually no physical signs to definitively diagnose IBS, diagnosis often comes from a process of elimination, where your physician systematically excludes other conditions with similar symptoms, such as food poisoning, colitis, colon cancer, and Crohn’s disease.

Doctors commonly call this a “diagnosis of exclusion,” because they are excluding other conditions before resorting to a diagnosis of the less widely understood IBS. Since the disorder is considered a functional condition, meaning that the colon is somehow functioning incorrectly, the prospect of misdiagnosis is significant.



As with any health issues, a second opinion can be enormously useful in validating or refuting your doctor’s findings. There are very few medical conditions that can definitely and unequivocally be diagnosed, but IBS is an example of a situation where the process of elimination has left no other possibilities for your health care professional.

The prospect of relief beyond a “process of elimination” is not available to all health care consumers, but it IS an option for you. As a Best Doctors subscriber, you have access to the best medical minds in the world, so that you can be sure you are getting the right treatment and the best information.

If you have been diagnosed with IBS, or are simply exhibiting symptoms like the ones described above, take advantage of the best information available to you, in the form of a second opinion from Best Doctors.

**The benefit of *removing* the doubt**  
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