

# OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Troy H. Peters

## Irritable Bowel Syndrome

*Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is one of the most common gastrointestinal disorders. It affects approximately 10 percent to 20 percent of the general population. Dr. Peters has gathered new information about natural solutions for IBS, which may dramatically affect anyone who suffers from this painful condition.*

### What Are the Symptoms?

IBS is a chronic condition with symptoms that can worsen or improve at different times.

Symptoms include abdominal pain or cramping, bloating, excess gas, constipation, diarrhea, mucus in the stool, nausea and headaches. The condition appears to be exacerbated by stress.

Symptoms vary widely from one person to another, but are normally mild. Only a handful of people suffer from severe distress.

### IBS Body Mechanics

In people without IBS, muscles that line the walls of the intestines contract and relax smoothly. Normally, food is moved from the stomach through the intestines to the rectum in a rhythmic pattern.

However, Dr. Peters explains to patients with IBS that, in their case, contractions are longer lasting and much stronger than normal, producing symptoms such as gas, bloating, diarrhea and constipation.

### High Costs

Dr. Peters also makes patients aware of the huge financial toll that IBS extracts. In a two-year analysis, investigators found that, compared with non-IBS subjects, IBS patients:

- ✓ Have more emergency, surgery and medical visits
- ✓ Are hospitalized more often

- ✓ Receive more medications

Total medical costs were 35 percent higher for IBS sufferers with mild symptoms, 52 percent higher for those with moderate pain and 59 percent higher for severe patients, compared with IBS-free individuals (*Am J Gastroenterol* 2003;98:600-7).

### What Causes It?

Doctors of chiropractic know that a disease's symptoms are only the tip of the iceberg. They shy away from "Band-Aid" approaches, which often involve drugs, to cover up symptoms; instead, they focus on uncovering the problems hidden below the surface.

The foundation of this approach lies in the *chiropractic lifestyle*, which involves all-natural, prevention-oriented tactics and a sensitivity to symptoms as a signal of a larger problem.

If you suffer from IBS, your chiropractor will work with you to find the source of your pain, including exploring the possible causes listed below.

### Antibiotics

One potential cause of IBS is antibiotics, which dramatically affect bacteria in the intestines.

### Bacteria Benefits

In one study, Yale University researchers discovered that the beneficial bacteria in the stomach help to prevent injury to the lining of the intestines.



They found that "good bacteria" trigger proteins called Toll-like receptors (TLRs), which maintain intestinal cells and tissues and help the body fight off injury.

### Antibiotics Attack

In their experiment, the scientists studied normal mice that had good intestinal bacteria and mice that were fed antibiotics, which had depleted their intestines of good bacteria.

After ingesting a drug that is toxic to colon cells, the normal mice with good bacteria recovered completely and quickly. Their intestinal cells produced numerous proteins to repair the damaged tissues.

However, the mice taking antibiotics suffered severe damage to their intestines. They lacked the TLRs needed to maintain and repair the intestines. The antibiotics killed off both good and bad bacteria, leaving the stomach more vulnerable to damage. The researchers point out that this discovery should affect IBS treatment (*Cell* 2004;118:229-41).

### Antibiotics Aggravate

In addition, researchers from St. George's Hospital Medical School, London, found that subjects who took a course of antibiotics were more than *three times* as likely to report more bowel symptoms four months later than antibiotic-free patients.

**Dr. Troy H. Peters, Peters Wellness Chiropractic, Inc. (623) 935-0911  
1616 North Litchfield Road, Suite 100, Goodyear, AZ 85395 [www.PetersWellness.com](http://www.PetersWellness.com)**

Both groups of patients answered questionnaires assessing symptoms at the study's onset and after four months. Twenty of 42 antibiotic subjects who completed the study (48 percent) had one or more additional bowel symptoms after four months.

However, only 11 out of 49 control subjects (22 percent) had a similar increase in symptoms. While 24 percent of antibiotic patients demonstrated two or more additional symptoms at four months, only six percent of control subjects fared the same (*Am J Gastroenterol* 2002;97:104-8).

### **Back Problems**

IBS may also stem from problems with the back.

Research shows a link between IBS symptoms and back pain, a phenomenon that chiropractors have observed in many patients. An investigation that compared 100 IBS patients and healthy individuals found that IBS patients had significantly higher back pain risks (*Gut* 1986;27:37-40).

Back pain is often caused by dysfunctional areas in the back called **vertebral subluxations** — a condition where spinal movement is restricted or vertebrae become misaligned. Based on the findings of the study above, chiropractors theorize that IBS could also stem from this condition.

Chiropractors correct vertebral subluxations with safe and effective maneuvers called **chiropractic adjustments**.

### **Diet**

What you eat may also determine whether you suffer from IBS.

In one study performed in the Netherlands, 142 IBS patients and 100 general practitioners completed a questionnaire regarding IBS treatments.

In 94 percent of cases, the doctors started IBS care with dietary advice. However, only nine percent of the patients appreciated the dietary counseling, while 37 percent expected immediate drug treatments (*Can J Gastroenterol* 2003;17:363-8).

IBS sufferers should know the facts: Research shows that symptoms may

flare with specific foods, such as wheat, caffeine, citrus and dairy.

In one report, 330 IBS patients and 80 healthy volunteers completed a food questionnaire that rated symptoms for 35 different foods. The result? Gastrointestinal symptoms — especially gas and abdominal pain — were associated with meals in 209 (63 percent) of the IBS patients. Food-related symptoms were higher in IBS patients than the healthy individuals.

Just what were the food culprits? Carbohydrate-rich food, fatty fare, coffee, alcohol and hot spices caused the highest number of symptoms (*Digestion* 2001;63:108-15). Wheat and dairy are also suspect. On the other hand, some foods, such



as those loaded with the traditional curry spice turmeric, may reduce symptoms. In one report, scientists discovered that when mice with inflammatory bowel disease ate curcumin, chemical markers of inflammation associated with the disease significantly dropped (*Gastroenterology* 2002;123:1912).

### **Stress & Depression**

Studies now illustrate what doctors of chiropractic have known all along: Stress and depression negatively affect the body and are linked to multiple diseases, including IBS.

Researchers compared levels of stress and depression in 30 IBS patients to 30 IBS-free individuals. The participants also shared their methods of coping with stress and depression with the investigators.

IBS patients had significantly higher stress scores than controls. More than 50 percent of IBS sufferers had defi-

nite and “clinically significant” anxiety and/or depression. The researchers concluded that “stressful life-event scores are significantly higher in IBS patients than in normal controls. Presence or absence of anxiety and/or depression influences how the patient with IBS copes with illness.” (*J Assoc Physicians India* 2000;48:589-93.)

### **Yoga**

The stress/IBS connection is reinforced by a study that links IBS relief to yoga.

The word yoga means to yoke or join together. Its name symbolizes yoga's connection between mind and body.

Yoga may help IBS sufferers, according to one study performed in India — where yoga gets its roots.

Researchers divided 22 IBS patients, aged 20 to 50 years, into two groups: One received a drug to treat symptoms, while the other practiced yoga twice a day for two months. The participants' symptoms and anxiety levels were measured at the start of the study, after one month and at two months.

After two months, both groups enjoyed a significant decrease in bowel symptoms and anxiety. The authors concluded, “The study indicates a beneficial effect of yogic intervention over conventional treatment in diarrhea-predominant IBS.” (*Appl Psychophysiol Biofeedback* 2004;29:19-33.)

### **Action Plan**

If you currently have IBS, ask your doctor of chiropractic to help you design a plan of attack using all-natural methods to combat the disorder. By helping you adopt a chiropractic lifestyle, the doctor will guide you to wellness through prevention.

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