

# The Natural Pharmacy Newsletter

*Wellspring Custom Pharmacy*

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## *In The News*

### **Irritable Bowel Syndrome VS Inflammatory Bowel Disease**

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) are often used interchangeably and can be mistaken for each other. However, they are two different disease states with different treatments and we will try to clarify them in this newsletter.

IBS is not an inflammatory condition and is typically more common in women than men. Symptoms will usually develop before age 50, but often times will begin at a much early age. Symptoms include abdominal pain, constipation OR diarrhea, heartburn, nausea, bloating, and flatulence.

IBS is considered a “functional” bowel disorder because nothing is physically wrong with the digestive tract, but symptoms are still present. Symptoms are exacerbated by certain foods, stress, menstrual periods, and even excess gas. See Table 1 for some common foods that exacerbate IBS symptoms.

IBD is an inflammatory disease that usually develops in young adults between ages 15 and 25 years old and is more severe than IBS. There are two different forms of IBD more commonly known as Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis (UC).

Crohn’s disease can affect any part of the digestive tract, but is most common in the small intestine. UC typically involves only the large intestine or colon. The cause of IBD is unknown, but it is an immune mediated

response that is likely caused by genetic, immunologic, and environmental factors.

IBD has symptoms of diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea, ulcers, weight loss, and sometimes bloody stool. An endoscopy or colonoscopy and lab tests are required to distinguish between the two forms of IBD. IBD is often characterized by episodes of flare-ups followed by a resolution of symptoms.

Table 1. Foods That Exacerbate IBS Symptoms

Alcohol	Caffeine	Milk products
Vegetables (eg- broccoli)	Milk products or lactose	Sugarless gum/sorbitol
High fat food	Beans	Spicy foods



*Look for our new updated web site debuting in February, 2009. We’ve made it easier to buy supplements on line. If we don’t have your email address, please let us enter your information and add [www.wellstore.com](http://www.wellstore.com) to your address list. We will be having “email only” specials in the very near future.*

## Treatment of IBS

There is no cure for IBS and treatment is centered around symptom control. IBS tends to be either diarrhea OR constipation dominant.

Treatment for diarrhea typically uses an anti-diarrheal such as loperamide or an antispasmodic like dicyclomine. Florastor is a probiotic that has been used to treat diarrhea, but studies are lacking for use in diarrhea dominant IBS. Fiber can also be used for diarrhea, which will be discussed next.

Constipation is most often treated with fiber such as methylcellulose, polycarbophil, or psyllium. Herbulk made by Metagenics is an example of a good fiber product. Fiber is a bulk laxative that absorbs fluid in the gut and promotes GI motility and defecation. Fiber is generally used for constipation, but may also be beneficial for diarrhea since it can absorb excess fluid in the gut that may be causing diarrhea.

Unfortunately, fiber does not work quickly and can take about 4 weeks of treatment for symptomatic relief. The amount of fiber that should be consumed in a day is 20-30 grams.

Stimulant laxatives can also be used and they include senna, aloe, cascara, and European buckthorn. These laxatives are potent and cause irritation in the digestive tract, which causes fluid secretion and defecation. Since stimulant laxatives work so quickly, they should not be used for more than a week. Fiber is a much safer treatment option.

Although more evidence is still needed, peppermint oil has been used to decrease muscle spasms, which decreases pain. Mentheril and Intelive are products that contain peppermint oil.

Ultimately the best treatment for IBS is by controlling your diet and decreasing stress. IBS symptoms can be exacerbated by many different foods as shown in the table above and can be different for each person. A food diary should be kept by patients so they know what types of foods to avoid and what they can tolerate. Eating smaller meals more often or smaller portions can help. Eat lots of fruits and vegetables and drink plenty of water.

Exercise not only helps keep you healthy, but it can also reduce your stress and improve bowel function. Other ways to reduce stress are to use relaxation techniques, set aside time for yourself each day, and take vacations often.

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## Treatment of IBD

There is no cure for IBD and treatment is required for flare-ups and to prevent flare-ups. Treatment for IBD flare-ups include symptom relief with antidiarrheals and anticholinergics to relieve diarrhea and abdominal pain. The drug of choice for treatment of a flare-up is 5-aminosalicylic acid (mesalamine) and it works as an antioxidant to prevent tissue damage and to reduce inflammation. Corticosteroids are used in more severe cases of IBD.

IBD patients who are in remission will still take mesalamine as prophylactic treatment to prevent flare-ups. Another promising treatment to help prevent IBD flare-ups is fish oils. Fish oils have anti-inflammatory effects, suppress mediators of immune function, and decrease antibody production. Clinical trials using fish oils have been inconsistent, but overall it is still good for your health.

Probiotics are another option to help treat IBD. Probiotics help restore the normal flora in the gut and prevent pathogenic bacteria from colonizing the digestive tract. VSL #3 is a specific probiotic that contains Bifidobacteria, Lactobacillus, and Streptococcus that has been shown to decrease relapse rates and help induce remission in UC patients. However, there are several supplements you should avoid because they can worsen IBD symptoms and are shown in Table 2.

As mentioned in the treatment of IBS, diet and reducing stress are also important in treating IBD. A diet low in fat, dairy products, and fiber is recommended, but lots of fruits and vegetables are encouraged. Plenty of rest and low stress reduces the number of flare-ups too. Surgery is an option for patients with UC since it mainly affects the colon, but is usually only a temporary relief of the disease.

If you have any questions about IBS, IBD, or any of the treatment options discussed in this newsletter please ask any of our staff and we will be glad to help.

Table 2. Supplements that might worsen IBD symptoms

Alder buckthorn	Castor oil	Fo-ti
Angel's trumpet	Senna	Aloe latex
European buckthorn	Cascara	Rhubarb