

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) in Women

Why It's Different & How to Manage it

- Women are up to 2X more likely to have Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) than men¹

x2

- IBS relief is possible - with personalized, supportive care that sees the whole you

Why IBS is More Common in Women

- Hormonal influence²
 - Progesterone slows digestion
 - Estrogen impacts sensitivity & inflammation
- Menstrual triggers³
 - 50-60% report worsened IBS during periods
- Stress response differs; slows digestion & makes gut more sensitive to pain

What IBS in Women Looks Like

- Constipation dominant (IBS-C)
- Related symptoms:
 - Pelvic pain
 - Fatigue
 - Painful periods
- Common overlap; 40% of women with endometriosis also have IBS

DIAGNOSIS & DELAYS

Average delay; 6.6 years to diagnosis⁴

- Reasons: stigma, dismissal, symptom overlap

Rome IV Criteria for diagnosis

- Focus on symptom patterns of bowel movement frequency, pain & stool appearance

The Power of Self-Advocacy

- Keep a symptom & menstrual journal
- Consider a tracking app; including CDHF's "MyIBS" app
- Ask questions, request tests, seek second opinions
- Reminder: "It's not all in your head."

See your doctor if you have:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Blood in stool
- Anemia
- Vomiting
- Family history of IBD or colorectal cancer

TREATMENT FOR WOMEN - WHOLE-BODY

Natural Strategies	Medical Tools	Special Considerations
Low FODMAP diet (short term)	Medication for cramping	Lifestyle changes that fit
Calm the gut-brain axis (ie. yoga, mindfulness, CBT)	Laxatives	Hormone support for perimenopause
Good sleep, hydration	Probiotics / fibre	Gentle treatment if pregnant

1. UNC Center for functional GI & motility disorders
 2. J Neurogastroenterol Motil. 2018 Oct 1;24(4):544-558. doi: 10.5056/jnm18082
 3. Gastroenterol Rep (Oxf). 2015 Mar 17;3(3):185-193. doi: 10.1093/gastro/gov010
 4. Clin Exp Gastroenterol. 2010 Sep 17;3:127-137. doi: 10.2147/CEG.S12596