

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (Ibs)

What Is Irritable Bowel Syndrome (Ibs)?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common condition that affects the digestive system, causing symptoms such as abdominal pain, bloating, and changes in bowel habits. Although IBS can be uncomfortable and sometimes disruptive to daily life, it does not cause permanent damage to the gut or increase the risk of more serious conditions. At Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic, we specialise in diagnosing and managing IBS to help you feel better and regain control of your health.

What Causes Ibs?

The exact cause of IBS is not fully understood, but several factors are thought to play a role, including:

- **Gut-brain connection** - Disruptions in communication between your brain and gut can affect how the muscles in your digestive system work, leading to IBS symptoms.
- **Sensitivity to certain foods** - Some people with IBS have a heightened sensitivity to specific foods, though this is not the same as a food allergy.
- **Infections or gut imbalances** - A history of gastroenteritis or an imbalance in gut bacteria may contribute to IBS.
- **Stress and anxiety** - Emotional stress can trigger or worsen symptoms.

IBS symptoms often vary between individuals, and the condition may be influenced by a combination of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors.

What Are The Symptoms Of Ibs?

Symptoms of IBS can range from mild to severe and may come and go over time. Common symptoms include:

- Abdominal pain or cramping, often relieved after a bowel movement
- Bloating or a feeling of fullness
- Changes in bowel habits, such as diarrhoea, constipation, or both (alternating)
- Excessive gas or flatulence
- Mucus in your stool

IBS symptoms are often triggered by certain foods, stress, or hormonal changes, such as during menstruation.

When To Seek Medical Advice

While IBS is a functional disorder (meaning it affects how the gut works rather than causing structural changes), you should seek medical advice if:

- Your symptoms are severe or persistent

- You notice unexplained weight loss
- There is blood in your stool
- You have difficulty swallowing
- Your symptoms are accompanied by a fever or severe fatigue

These may be signs of a more serious condition that requires further investigation.

How Is Ibs Diagnosed?

At Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic, we take a comprehensive approach to diagnosing IBS, ensuring other conditions are ruled out. Your consultant will discuss your symptoms, medical history, and lifestyle in detail. Diagnostic tests may include:

- **Blood tests** - To check for signs of anaemia, inflammation, or coeliac disease.
- **Stool tests** - To rule out infections or inflammatory bowel diseases like Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.
- **Endoscopy or colonoscopy** - If necessary, to look for structural abnormalities in your digestive tract.
- **Breath tests** - To detect lactose intolerance or small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO).

Once other conditions are excluded, a diagnosis of IBS can be made based on your symptoms and their impact on your daily life.

How Is Ibs Managed And Treated?

While there is no cure for IBS, there are many effective ways to manage symptoms and improve your quality of life. Your treatment plan may include:

- **Dietary changes:**
 - o Following a low FODMAP diet to reduce symptoms caused by certain carbohydrates.
 - o Keeping a food diary to identify and avoid trigger foods.
- **Lifestyle modifications:**
 - o Managing stress through relaxation techniques, exercise, or mindfulness.
 - o Getting enough sleep and staying hydrated.
- **Medications:**
 - o Antispasmodics to relieve abdominal pain.
 - o Laxatives for constipation or anti-diarrhoeal medications as needed.
 - o Probiotics to improve gut health.
- **Support and education:**
 - o Joining support groups or attending educational sessions to better understand IBS and its management.

Your consultant will work closely with you to develop a personalised plan that addresses your specific symptoms and triggers.

Why Choose Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic?

At Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic, we provide expert care for IBS and other digestive conditions. Our experienced team offers a patient-centred approach, combining advanced diagnostics with tailored treatments to help you manage your symptoms effectively. With our state-of-the-art facilities and compassionate care, we are dedicated to improving your gut health and overall wellbeing.

Contact Us

If you're struggling with IBS symptoms or need a tailored management plan, contact Birmingham Gastroenterology Clinic today to book your consultation. Early intervention and expert support can help you regain control and enjoy a better quality of life.