Irritable Bowel Syndrome

You have a problem with your large bowel. This is called irritable bowel syndrome or spastic colon. It can cause cramping in the lower belly. You may also have more rumbling, gurgling, and bloating. Diarrhea and mucus in the stool are common. Constipation with hard small stools is also common. The pain will often recede after a bowel movement. This problem can come and go for months or years. The cause is unknown. A poor diet and emotional stress can add to the problems.

There is no test to prove you have irritable bowel. Some tests and x-rays may be needed to be sure you do not have a more serious problem.

Treatment of irritable bowel includes:

- Diet - Increase fiber and bulk (whole grains, bran, vegetables, fruit) and reduce fats (fried foods, dairy products, meats).
- Exercise regularly. Use walking or other exercises to reduce your stress.
- Try a psyllium product (Metamucil, Fiberall). One tablespoon in water two times daily may be helpful.
- For diarrhea from irritable bowel, avoid food containing fructose and lactose.
- Reduce gas and bloating by avoiding milk products, beans, onions, carrots, prunes, apricots, bananas, raisins, pretzels, and bagels.
- See your caregiver for follow-up as recommended.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU HAVE:

- Increasing abdominal pain.
- Lasting diarrhea.
- Severe constipation.
- Blood in your stools.
- Problems passing your water.
- A fever.

Medications to treat spasms, diarrhea, anxiety, or depression may also be beneficial. Your caregiver can help you with this.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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