

Gastrointestinal Diseases: Similiar yet Different Symptoms

Differentiating Symptoms

Gastrointestinal diseases have many overlapping symptoms. With that, you and your doctor will likely spend time carefully reviewing your history of symptoms to diagnose whether a digestive disease is present. Based on your symptoms, the table below is by no means a definitive method for diagnosing yourself. It is meant to guide you and your physician to arrive at a diagnosis that you are both comfortable with.

Symptoms:	Irritable Bowel Syndrome	Inflammatory Bowel Disease		Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease
	IBS	Crohn's Disease	Ulcerative Colitis	(GERD)
alternating constipation /diarrhea	✓			✓
abdominal pain	✓	✓	✓	✓ painful or burning sensation in the upper abdomen or chest
bloating / distention	✓			✓
mucus present	✓		✓	
persistent diarrhea	✓	✓	✓	
loss of appetite		✓	✓	✓
rectal bleeding		✓	✓	
fistulas / strictures		✓		
anemia		✓	✓	
delayed growth		✓	✓	
fever		✓	✓	
malabsorption		✓ B12, Calcium, Iron		
weight loss		✓		
fatigue		✓		
other symptoms		eye and skin irritations, arthritis		acid reflux
	<p>IBS is a functional bowel disorder of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract characterized by recurrent abdominal pain and discomfort accompanied by alterations in bowel function, diarrhea, constipation or a combination of both, typically over months or years. A diagnosis of IBS has been reported by 10 to 20% of adults in the United States, and symptoms of IBS are responsible for over 3 million yearly visits to physicians. Research suggests that IBS is one of the most common functional GI disorders. IBS exhibits a predominance in women, with females representing over 70% of IBS sufferers.</p> <p>A combination of treatments may help a sufferer cope with the symptoms These include stress, dietary, lifestyle changes and perhaps the introduction of medications.</p>	<p>Crohn's disease is a chronic, episodic, inflammatory condition of the gastrointestinal tract characterized by affecting the entire wall of the involved bowel or intestines. It can affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract from mouth to anus. Crohn's disease can also cause complications outside of the gastrointestinal tract such as skin rashes, arthritis, and inflammation of the eye.</p> <p>Treatment include medications to reduce inflammation or to suppress the immune response. Some patients may require surgery.</p>	<p>Ulcerative colitis is a form of colitis, a disease of the intestine, specifically the large intestine or colon, that includes characteristic ulcers, or open sores, in the colon. The main symptom of active disease is usually diarrhea mixed with blood, of gradual onset.</p> <p>Ulcerative Colitis is treated by medications with the aim to maintain remission. Some patients may require surgery.</p>	<p>Gastroesophageal Reflux is a condition where the lower esophageal sphincter (the muscular ring at the lower end of the esophagus) is abnormally relaxed and allows the stomach's acidic contents to flow back or 'reflux' into the gullet (esophagus). It can also cause heartburn. It is a common condition and one of the most frequent causes of indigestion. Anyone, including infants and children, can have GERD. If not treated, it can lead to more serious health problems. In some cases, you might need medicines or surgery. However, many people can improve their symptoms by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoiding alcohol and spicy, fatty or acidic foods that trigger heartburn Eating smaller meals Not eating close to bedtime Losing weight if needed Wearing loose-fitting clothes

References: [About.com](http://www.about.com) - Inflammatory Bowel Disease, [MedlinePlus](http://www.medlineplus.gov) - GERD

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