Medications for Irritable Bowel Syndrome

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Irritable Bowel Syndrome and Medication Efficacy

Irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, is a gastrointestinal disorder that is often difficult to treat and bring under control. Individuals suffering from this condition often are subject to many trial-and-error approaches regarding diet and medication before any relief of discomfort is attained. But what is the most effective medications for IBS?

One of the problems that doctors face when seeking out an effective medication for IBS is that all patients afflicted with this disease have differing responses to treatment. The main course of treatment has been to encourage patients to improve their diets, rest during episodes, remain hydrated, and continue taking their prescribed medication to help control the disease.

There are a variety of prescription medications that have been effective in the treatment of IBS. Each of the medications approved for this condition comes with its side effects and levels of efficacy. Determining which medication will be the most effective is highly dependent upon the individual being treated and the prescribing medical practitioner’s expertise.

Anticholinergic Agents

Anticholinergic agents, or antispasmodics, are the most common form of medication prescribed to patients with IBS. These medications have a calming effect on the smooth muscle of the intestines, allowing the bowels to relax. Antispasmodics are often effective in relieving heavy cramping that is often experienced as a result of IBS.

Dicyclomine hydrochloride and hyoscyamine sulfate are two of the most commonly prescribed anticholinergic medications. Side effects of anticholinergic agents include nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, and constipation.

Anti-Diarrheals

Medical practitioners typically recommend medication to treat diarrhea associated with IBS known as antidiarrheals. These medications are usually successful at reducing the frequency of loose stool and also help in easing intestinal pain.

Loperamide (Imodium) is an over-the-counter drug that helps stop diarrhea and is considered safe to use during bouts of IBS. The main side effect of this medication is possible constipation if the individual takes this for more than a few days.

Diphenoxylate hydrochloride/atropine sulfate (Lomotil) is often prescribed by doctors for patients who are not finding over-the-counter loperamide helpful. This medication helps to stop loose stool by stimulating the opioid receptors in the gastrointestinal tract. Side effects include sleepiness, constipation, blurred vision, nausea, and vomiting.

Bulk Laxatives

Patients typically benefit from introducing bulk laxatives to their daily diets to firm up the loose stool and promote normal bowel movement. Bulk laxatives should be taken on a regular schedule to keep constipation at bay.

Probiotics

The use of probiotics to ease the symptoms of IBS has shown great promise in treating this disease. Probiotics help restore good bacteria in the intestinal tract and help bring balance between good and bad bacteria in the body. Patients with IBS tend to have a deficiency in acidophilus which helps prevent irritation in the intestines.

While there still is a need for further research into effective medications for IBS, maintaining intestinal health and physical well-being for IBS sufferers remains reliant upon the current medications available. Along with a healthy diet, IBS medications can improve the overall prognosis for patients battling this condition.