



# IBS Misdiagnosis

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## Frequency of Misdiagnosis With Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Unfortunately, misdiagnosis is fairly common when it comes to IBS, mainly because there is no physical abnormality to test for. Constipation, bloating, diarrhea and abdominal pain that characterize IBS can be extreme and alarming, but since they are not exclusive to IBS, the symptoms can lead sufferers to suspect a more serious illness.

Navigating the uncertainty can be difficult, but good education on the nature of IBS and learning about the warning signs of other disorders are important steps to a swift diagnosis and effective treatment.

## Illnesses Commonly Misdiagnosed as IBS

Sometimes the symptoms of IBS can mimic another serious disorder, and without closer attention, a simple oversight can become a major health problem. If your symptoms manifest suddenly or inconsistently, be sure to consult with your doctor about other possible diagnoses, such as:

- **Food allergy or intolerance.** Adverse reactions to certain foods are quite common, and they can appear at any stage of life. Be sure to rule this out before beginning treatment for IBS -- a simple dietary change can save you months of stress and discomfort.
- **Celiac disease.** An intolerance for gluten can incite an autoimmune response, which can cause mild to severe gastrointestinal distress. Luckily, changes to your diet can generally resolve the discomfort and control the disease.
- **Colon cancer.** Although it's much rarer than IBS, fears of colon cancer are not uncommon for those who live with chronic bowel issues. Most gastrointestinal symptoms do not point to cancer, but blood in the stool, significant weight loss, and sudden, extreme pain in the middle of the night are causes for concern.
- **Ovarian cancer.** Fatigue, bloating, constipation and feeling full after eating small amounts can be common in IBS, but they could also be early warning signs of ovarian cancer. Since this type of cancer isn't very common, your doctor may not suspect it after an initial examination.
- **Endometriosis.** Pelvic pain is more common than bowel issues in endometriosis, but some women experience various digestive symptoms with the disease.
- **Inflammatory bowel disease.** Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis can share some symptoms with IBS, but a colonoscopy will reveal signs of inflammation in the digestive tract (IBS won't show up on this sort of diagnostic test).

Gastrointestinal symptoms can point to another illness, or less commonly, another disorder occurring simultaneously. Not only is this a particularly unfair situation, but it can complicate diagnosis and treatment, especially if the possibility is ignored for a long time. It's a good idea to talk to your doctor about the chances of a separate illness alongside your IBS.

## Techniques for Accurate IBS Diagnosis

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IBS symptoms are often vague, complex or inconsistent, which means it's important to consult a medical professional before drawing any of your own conclusions. A diagnosis of IBS can be confirmed with the help of Rome criteria, which assesses the likelihood of IBS based on the frequency and duration of symptoms.

This checklist of criteria can effectively narrow down the possibilities, but it's often more effective to rule out other illnesses before moving on to a treatment plan. Blood tests for celiac disease and allergy tests for disorders like lactose intolerance can be relatively easy and non-invasive, but your doctor may want to conduct a CT scan or a colonoscopy to check for physical signs of disease in the bowel before they consider an IBS diagnosis.