

# IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (“IBS”)

## BASICS

### OVERVIEW

- A condition characterized by long-term (chronic) intermittent signs of abnormal function of the large intestines (colon), in the absence of structural gastrointestinal disease
- “Gastro-“ refers to stomach; “intestinal” refers to the intestines
- “Bowel” refers to the intestines

### SIGNALMENT/DESCRIPTION of ANIMAL

#### Species

- Dogs

#### Breed Predilections

- Any breed; especially working dogs

### SIGNS/OBSERVED CHANGES in the ANIMAL

- Long-term (chronic), intermittent signs of large-bowel diarrhea, including frequent passage of small amounts of bowel movement (feces) and mucus, and difficulty defecating (known as “dyschezia”)
- Passage of blood in the bowel movement or stool (known as “hematochezia”) is uncommon.
- Abdominal pain, bloating, vomiting, and nausea may occur
- Physical examination is often unremarkable
- Rectal examination is normal, aside from large-bowel diarrhea

### CAUSES

- Unknown

### RISK FACTORS

- Stress (such as changes in the household or being left alone for extended periods) may be associated with episodes of diarrhea
- In many dogs, stress appears to play no role

## TREATMENT

### HEALTH CARE

- Outpatient medical management

### DIET

- A highly digestible diet with added soluble fiber often improves diarrhea, but rarely completely resolves clinical signs

## MEDICATIONS

Medications presented in this section are intended to provide general information about possible treatment. The treatment for a particular condition may evolve as medical advances are made; therefore, the medications should not be considered as all inclusive.

- Drug therapy for several days up to 1 to 2 weeks during episodes
- [Sulfasalazine](#) (Azulfidine®)—medication that has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties; reported to improve signs in some dogs with significant difficulty defecating (dyschezia)

#### **Intestinal Motility Modifiers**

- Opiate antidiarrheals improve signs by increasing rhythmic segmentation in the intestines
- [Loperamide](#) (Imodium®)
- [Diphenoxylate](#) (Lomotil®)

#### **Antispasmodic–Tranquilizer Combinations**

- Used to relieve abdominal cramping, bloating, and distress
- [Chlordiazepoxide](#) and [clidinium bromide](#) (Librax®)
- [Isopropamide](#) and [prochlorperazine](#) (Darbazine®)

#### **Medications to Control Nausea and Vomiting Administered by Injection (Known as “Parenteral Antiemetics”)**

- If nausea and vomiting preclude administering medication by mouth, administer antiemetics by injection for 1 to 2 days
- [Chlorpromazine](#) (Thorazine®)

## **FOLLOW-UP CARE**

### **PATIENT MONITORING**

- Monitor stool consistency and watch for signs of difficulty defecating (dyschezia) and abdominal discomfort—call your pet’s veterinarian if you observe changes in stool consistency or any signs of large-bowel problems

### **PREVENTIONS AND AVOIDANCE**

- Minimize any stressful factors in the pet’s environment that might precipitate an episode

### **EXPECTED COURSE AND PROGNOSIS**

- Should see improved stools, decreased mucus, and relief of difficulty defecating (dyschezia) and abdominal distress within 1 to 2 days of starting medication
- In some dogs, signs completely resolve following treatment and dietary alterations; others have long-term episodic signs

### **KEY POINTS**

- Response to treatment varies and affected dogs may have long-term, intermittent clinical signs
- Eliminate any stressful factors in the dog’s environment if possible

