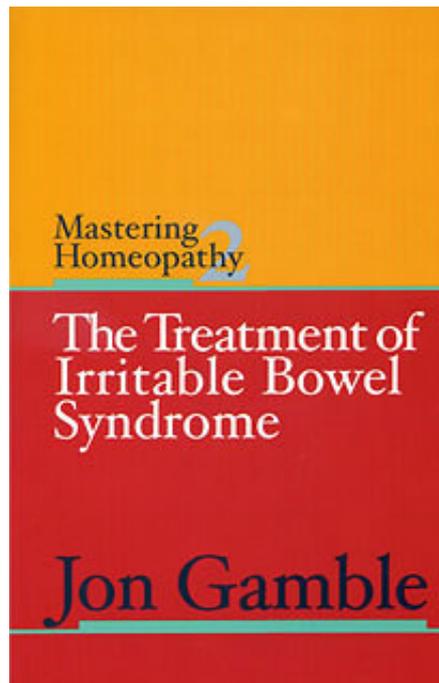


Jon Gamble

Mastering Homeopathy 2

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Chapter 1

Irritable Bowel Syndrome: Diagnostic Criteria, Causes & Categories

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What is Irritable Bowel Syndrome?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) refers to *shifting abdominal pain with alternating constipation and diarrhoea*. This is sometimes described as irregular or disturbed bowel function. One of these symptoms alone may be the prominent one which compels a patient to seek treatment. There may be pain with either constipation or diarrhoea, but more commonly, IBS refers to this alternation between constipation and diarrhoea, where the pain is shifting. While the pain is often confined to one quadrant of the abdomen, it is not always in precisely the same location. Pain relief from passing flatus is found only in some patients.

Diagnostic Features of IBS

IBS has recurrent abdominal pain plus two or more of:

- o Pain better from defecation
- o Altered stool at the onset of pain
- o Abdominal bloating
- o Increased or decreased stools at the onset of pain
- o A 'never completely empty' sensation after passing stool
- o Passing mucus from the rectum
- o Morning cluster of motions
- o Constipation alternating with diarrhoea¹

¹ Compare the Manning Criteria:
Irritable bowel syndrome if >3 are present:

- o Abdominal pain
- o Relief of pain on defecation
- o Increased stool frequency with pain
- o Looser stools with pain
- o Mucus in stools
- o Feeling of incomplete evacuation

See also the Rome n criteria in Appendix 1

Other symptoms reported by patients with IBS:

- o Fatigue (some IBS patients also have Chronic Fatigue Syndrome)
- o Nausea
- o Unexplained insomnia or disturbed sleep patterns
- o Susceptibility to colds, flus, sinusitis or post-nasal drip
- o Headaches
- o Allergic sensitivity
- o Restless leg syndrome
- o Gastric reflux
- o Crawling skin.

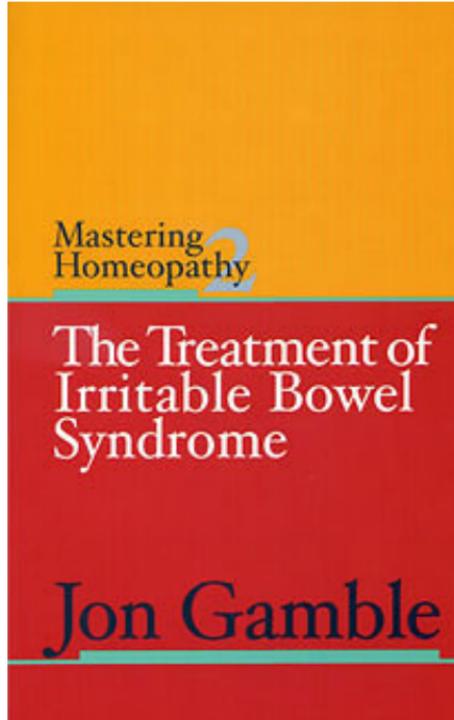
Patients are sometimes diagnosed with IBS even though they do not have the above specific symptoms. In practice, IBS has become a generic term for the presence of abdominal pain with variable bowel habits, once pathology tests have excluded other causes. Some of the 'red flag' symptoms in abdominal pain are listed below. With the rare exception of weight loss and fever (See Category 1 IBS), the symptoms below are not IBS and always require further evaluation:

- o Weight loss
- o Blood in stools
- o Anaemia
- o Fever.

If the patient is over 50 and presents with altered bowel function, medical evaluation is always recommended.

It is also helpful, at least from a treatment perspective, to classify IBS as either constipation- or diarrhoea-dominant, since this will greatly affect the treatment plan.

When patients present for homeopathic treatment, many have already had a normal colonoscopy to exclude pathology. IBS is therefore considered to be a *functional* disturbance rather than a pathology.



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