



HEALTH AWARENESS

Dealing With Digestive Disorders

(NAPSA)—There could be good news for the millions of people living with the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS): Help is available.

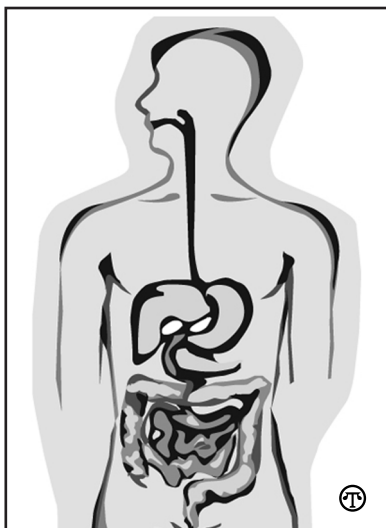
The problem, according to a survey conducted by the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD), is that less than one in five respondents who are symptomatic have been diagnosed with IBS.

“Many people have heard of IBS, but they’re not sure what it is. As a result, people may not realize the symptoms they’re experiencing add up to IBS,” said Nancy Norton, president and founder of IFFGD. Norton established IFFGD in 1991 to help improve care by enhancing awareness and education and promoting research into treatments and cures for gastrointestinal disorders.

There are many causes for abdominal pain, but in IBS the pain or discomfort is persistent and is associated with a change in bowel habits, such as diarrhea or constipation. Bloating and feeling an urgent need to use a restroom also commonly occur. Symptoms may occur over a single long period or in several shorter bouts.

Anyone with persistent digestive problems should consult a doctor or other medical professional, Norton advises. A doctor will diagnose IBS by identifying symptoms typical of the disorder and excluding other medical conditions that may have a similar clinical presentation. Personal embarrassment prohibits many people from taking this important step, however.

“Many people are uncomfortable talking about their bowels,” Norton said. “This is unfortunate because simple lifestyle changes



sometimes can help tremendously in alleviating symptoms.”

Patients need to work closely with a doctor to find ways to reduce symptoms. Response to treatments varies considerably and needs to be individualized. There is no cure for IBS. It is a long-term condition with symptoms that tend to wax and wane and may also change over time. Assessing lifestyle or dietary factors that may be contributing to symptoms and addressing these factors, if present, is generally tried first.

When one person suffers with IBS, many others are affected, too. Knowledge, understanding and a supportive environment can help persons with IBS to best manage symptoms.

“There are no ‘easy fixes’ to IBS, and the disorder can be debilitating. But an educated patient, working closely with a health care professional, usually can live a full life,” Nancy Norton said.

For more information about IBS, visit www.aboutibs.org or call (888) 964-2001 (toll-free in the U.S.; elsewhere call 414-964-1799).