

# Understanding Your Body

FACTS TO HELP YOU HELP YOURSELF

## Millions Of Americans May Have IBS—And Not Know It

(NAPSA)—For the 10 to 15 percent of Americans suffering from Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), there's good news: knowledge about how to diagnose, manage and treat IBS is increasing. Still, millions of people living with the symptoms of IBS don't even know they may have the disease. In fact, a recent survey of 1,000 U.S. adults conducted by the International



Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD) found that less than one in five respondents who are symptomatic have been diagnosed with IBS.

IBS is characterized by abdominal pain or discomfort, accompanied by diarrhea and/or constipation, and often intestinal gas or bloating during at least 12 weeks out of a 12-month period. Symptoms may occur over a single long period or in several shorter bouts.

"Even though most Americans have heard of IBS, many don't really understand what it is. As a result, people may not realize that the symptoms they're experiencing add up to IBS," said Nancy Norton, IFFGD president and founder. Norton established IFFGD in 1991 to help improve care by enhancing awareness and education and promoting research into treatments and cures for gastrointestinal disorders.

The IFFGD survey indicated that while almost 40 percent of people who say they are symptomatic have not spoken to a health-care professional about their symptoms, 85 percent describe their symptoms as bothersome and nearly 30 percent report

symptoms that at least weekly affect their ability to continue their normal routine. In addition, according to the survey, only 66 percent of people have heard of "Irritable Bowel Syndrome" and more importantly, only 17 percent say they understand what IBS is.

"Because so many people are unaware of IBS, a large portion of people experiencing symptoms don't seek medical care," said Emeran Mayer, MD, a professor in the departments of medicine, physiology, psychiatry and biobehavioral sciences at UCLA and a member of IFFGD's advisory board. "They need to know more about IBS and that medical science has made great strides in diagnosing and treating it."

"IBS is the most common diagnosis made by gastroenterologists and one of the most common disorders seen by primary care doctors," added Norton. "Yet a vast number of people who suffer from IBS may not be getting the medical care they need. We're working to change that."

For more information about IBS, visit [www.aboutibs.org](http://www.aboutibs.org) or call IFFGD toll-free at 1-888-964-2001.