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Q: My doctor has recently diagnosed me with “IBS”. Can you explain what this is and give me some advice on natural treatment alternatives?

A: Irritable Bowel Syndrome, or IBS, is a disorder of the digestive and nervous systems. IBS used to be called “nervous digestion” because patients appear nervous, anxious or have digestive symptoms especially when they are under a large amount of stress. In a person with IBS, the colon is more sensitive than usual and responds strongly to stimuli that would not bother most people. Eating causes contractions of the colon, which induces the urge to visit the washroom within 1 - 2 hours. For someone with IBS, this urge comes earlier and food intake is associated with gas, pain and often alternating constipation & diarrhea.

While emotional conflict and stress do not cause IBS, they are common triggers for IBS symptoms. Another factor to consider is intolerance to foods such as wheat, corn, dairy, coffee, tea and citrus. Intolerance to lactose, found in dairy products, occurs frequently.

Using a combination of nutrition, herbs, acupuncture and distressing techniques designed specifically for you are great places to start to help you to better as soon as possible!

Mary MacDonald is a Naturopathic Doctor working in Milton. Her focus is family medicine and helping all members of the community to attain great health! For more information on Mary, contact her at the Holly Naturopathic Clinic: 905-878-9001, email her at: marymacdonald@gmail.com or check out her website at: www.marymacdonaldnd.ca