

IBS vs Colorectal Warning Signs Checklist

Use this checklist to prepare for a clinician conversation. It is not a self-diagnosis tool.

Common IBS-Style Features

- recurrent abdominal pain
- diarrhea, constipation, or both
- bloating
- urgency
- symptoms that wax and wane over time

Lower-GI Warning Signs to Escalate

- rectal bleeding
- blood mixed into stool
- stool that looks dark or black
- unexplained weight loss
- iron-deficiency anemia or low hemoglobin
- a bowel change that is new and not settling
- abdominal pain plus weight loss

More Urgent Reasons to Stop Self-Managing

- heavy bleeding
- black stool
- feeling faint or unusually weak
- severe or escalating abdominal pain
- vomiting, distention, or inability to pass gas or stool

Questions to Bring to a Clinician

1. Does this still fit a typical IBS pattern?
2. Should I have blood work for anemia or iron deficiency?
3. Does this symptom pattern justify FIT, colonoscopy, or referral?
4. Does my age change screening timing without changing the need to evaluate symptoms?