Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), referred to previously as spastic or nervous colon, and spastic bowel, is a functional gastrointestinal disorder characterized by a group of symptoms accompanied together that include abdominal pain and changes in the consistency of bowel movements. These symptoms occur over a long time, often years. It has been classified into four main types depending on whether diarrhea is common, constipation is common, both are common, or neither occurs very often. Irritable bowel syndrome is a functional gastrointestinal disorder with symptoms including abdominal pain associated with a change in stool form or frequency. The condition affects between 5% and 10% of otherwise healthy individuals at any one point in time and, in most people, runs a relapsing and remitting course. The pathophysiology of irritable bowel syndrome is incompletely understood, but it is well-established that there is disordered communication between the gut and the brain, leading to motility disturbances, visceral hypersensitivity, and altered CNS processing. Other less reproducible mechanisms might include genetic associations, alterations in gastrointestinal microbiota, and disturbances in mucosal and immune function. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can cause a great deal of discomfort. Learn about the symptoms, causes, and treatments of IBS. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a problem that affects the large intestine. It can cause abdominal cramping, bloating, and a change in bowel habits. Some people with the disorder have constipation.