What Is Irritable Bowel Syndrome?
Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is the most common functional bowel disorder diagnosed by primary care physicians and gastroenterologists. IBS is an episodic condition that is accompanied by a wide range of symptoms, including abdominal pain and discomfort, bloating, and altered bowel function (constipation and/or diarrhea).

IBS and Irritable Bowel Disease (IBD), which includes both Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, are often confused since both disorders have similar symptoms. IBS is the most common gastrointestinal disorder, and not a disease. Unlike IBD, IBS does not cause permanent inflammation, ulcers, or damage to the bowel, but sufferers report a tremendous impact on quality of life with both conditions.

Who Suffers from IBS?
• IBS affects up to one in five Americans (20 percent)³
• The exact number of people who suffer from IBS is hard to estimate, as up to 70 percent of persons with IBS symptoms do not seek medical treatment
• The ratio of female-to-male IBS sufferers is approximately 2:1⁴

What Causes IBS?
The causes of IBS are unclear. In IBS, the movement of the digestive tract does not work as it should, but there are no signs of changes in the intestines, such as inflammation or tumors. For some people with IBS, certain foods, stress, hormonal changes, and some antibiotics may trigger pain and other symptoms. Symptoms may present as diarrhea or constipation, or alternate between the two.

What Is Suggested for the Treatment and Management of IBS?
IBS management can range from dietary and behavioral changes to medications. Patients are often encouraged to try an exclusion diet—restricting their diet to bland foods, gradually adding new foods, and recording symptoms.⁵

Therapeutic agents, whether prescription or over-the-counter, are utilized primarily for symptom management. Recent research has found that individuals who suffer from frequent digestive upsets, including those with IBS, may have a pronounced disruption of bacterial balance, which is thought to contribute to their symptoms. Some experts recommend use of probiotics, or healthy bacteria, to alleviate symptoms.

Clinical trials have demonstrated that regular use of the probiotic strain Bifantis® (Bifidobacterium infantis 35624) promotes normal digestive health. In fact, Bifantis is the only probiotic cited in a recent New England Journal of Medicine article to help with bloating and IBS.⁶