The irritable colon syndrome is characterized by symptoms such as pain in the lower abdomen, abdominal distension, flatulence, bloating, diarrhea and/or constipation, and tenesmus (i.e., the urge to have a bowel movement that is not met). It is often referred to as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and it is thought to affect about 10% of the population. IBS symptoms are typically chronic and can vary from person to person. The exact cause of IBS is unknown, but it is believed to be related to a combination of factors, including genetics, diet, and stress. Some people with IBS find that certain foods trigger their symptoms, and there are a number of dietary and lifestyle changes that can help improve symptoms. There is no cure for IBS, but treatment can help manage symptoms. The best approach is to work with a healthcare provider to develop a personalized treatment plan.