

# Allergic disease linked to irritable bowel syndrome

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Adults with allergy symptoms report a high incidence of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), suggesting a link between atopic disorders and IBS according to a study published this month in *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, the scientific journal of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

Source: Rush University Medical Center

In a study of 125 adults, Rush University Medical Center's Dr. Mary C. Tobin and colleagues found the likelihood of IBS was significantly higher in patients with seasonal allergic rhinitis (2.67 times), patients with allergic eczema (3.85 times), and patients with depression (2.56 times).

Irritable Bowel Syndrome, affecting 15 percent of the general population, is a cluster of symptoms including abdominal pain for 12 weeks within the past year, change in stool consistency or frequency, and relief of abdominal pain with defecation. Various findings suggest indirectly that allergen exposure may lead to IBS symptoms in some patients, but the frequency has not been studied.

"The reported presence of allergic dermatitis was highly correlated to the presence of IBS in our population," investigators noted. "In atopic disease, allergic dermatitis is the first step of the 'atopic march.' In early childhood, AE (allergic eczema) is frequently associated with gastrointestinal dysfunction and food allergy. A clinical history of AE may be a useful marker for patients with gut hypersensitivity and atopic IBS."

Asthma and Irritable Bowel Syndrome was reported by 12 of 41 patients (29 percent), which is similar to findings in a previous report. Authors propose that "this subgroup of IBS (atopic IBS) be considered separately from patients with IBS without atopic symptoms, because they may have distinct pathophysiologic features and may benefit from specific therapeutic interventions."

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