WHAT IS IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME?
Irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, is a disorder of the digestive tract. Symptoms vary, but often include abdominal pain or other abdominal symptoms, such as cramping, bloating, gas or abdominal discomfort. Patients may have constipation or diarrhea or both.

WHAT IS IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME WITH CONSTIPATION?
Irritable bowel syndrome with constipation, or IBS-C, is one of three types of IBS in which constipation is the major bowel movement pattern observed. The other two types are irritable bowel syndrome with diarrhea, or IBS-D, and irritable bowel syndrome with alternating constipation and diarrhea, or IBS-A.1,2,3

People with IBS-C often suffer from intense abdominal pain, bloating and discomfort, in addition to symptoms of constipation. Those with IBS-C report fewer than 3 bowel movements per week, feeling of incomplete bowel movements, straining during bowel movements, and lumpy or hard stools.

WHY ASSIGN IBS PATIENTS TO SUBTYPES?
The subtype to which an IBS patient is assigned depends upon the predominant bowel movement pattern and symptoms. Subtypes help doctors guide treatment based on the dominant symptom.2

FACT:
As many as 1 in 6 – or up to 50 million adult Americans – suffer from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). A quarter of patients describe their pain as constant. In fact, IBS is one of the most common reasons for work or school absenteeism, second only to the common cold.
HOW COMMON IS IBS? WHAT ABOUT IBS-C?
IBS is one of the most commonly diagnosed gastrointestinal illnesses in the United States. As many as 1 in 6 – or up to 50 million adult Americans – suffer from IBS. About 13 million of these patients suffer from the IBS-C subtype.1,4

WHAT DIFFERENTIATES IBS-C FROM CHRONIC CONSTIPATION?
The differentiating factor is the abdominal pain that people with IBS-C have on a frequent and ongoing basis.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY IBS?
The symptoms of IBS usually begin in young adulthood, before age 35, and affect many more women than men.1,3,4

HOW SERIOUS IS IBS? WHAT IS IT LIKE TO LIVE WITH THIS DISORDER?
IBS profoundly impacts patients’ physical, social and working lives. A quarter of patients describe their abdominal pain as constant, many say bowel symptoms restrict their activities 20% of the time, and 4 out of 10 say IBS is causing them to lose control of their lives. IBS patients miss 3 to 4 times more work days annually than the national average of 5 days. In fact, IBS is one of the most common reasons for work or school absenteeism, second only to the common cold. Patients with IBS also have a higher rate of hospitalizations, feelings of poor quality of life, and abdominal surgeries than healthy people, and even patients with other gastrointestinal disorders.5

WHAT CAUSES IBS?
The causes of IBS aren’t well understood. Researchers believe that a combination of physical problems -- including brain-gut signal problems, hypersensitivity, bacterial gastroenteritis, small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), body chemicals, genetics, food sensitivity, and mental health problems can lead to IBS.1,2,3

FACT:
In the U.S. alone, the annual cost of IBS treatment is estimated to be as much as $10 billion in direct medical costs – excluding the price tag for Rx and OTC drugs – and $20 billion annually for indirect costs.
IS THERE A CURE FOR IBS?

There is no cure for IBS.

HOW IS IBS TREATED? WHAT ABOUT IBS-C?

IBS patients take a variety of medications -- including narcotic and non-narcotic analgesics, antidepressants and antispasmodics to treat the pain; antidiarrheals, OTC laxatives and stool softeners, and prescription treatments to regulate bowel movements -- all of which have the potential to cause side effects. IBS-C is also managed by treating symptoms through lifestyle changes such as a high-fiber diet, regular exercise and increased fluid intake. More than a third of IBS patients use complementary or alternative therapies, such as acupuncture and herbs, but there is little scientific evidence that these therapies work.

The bottom line: Fewer than 1 in 10 patients say they are satisfied with the available treatments for IBS.4,5

WHAT IS THE COST OF IBS TO HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS?

Healthcare systems spend billions of dollars annually to diagnose and treat this disorder. In the U.S. alone, the annual cost of IBS treatment is estimated to be as much as $10 billion in direct medical costs such as doctor and hospital visits and diagnostic procedures -- excluding the price tag for prescription and OTC drugs -- and $20 billion annually for indirect costs.6

REFERENCES: