

# Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) health centre

## SOURCES:

American Journal of Gastroenterology/Scandinavian Journal of Gastroenterology  
Effects of gut-directed hypnotherapy on IBS in different clinical settings-Results from two randomised, controlled trials

Professor Peter Whorwell from the University of Manchester School of Medicine

NHS Choices

CORE

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## IBS: Hypnosis an effective treatment

New Swedish studies demonstrate that hypnotherapy provides lasting relief, even for severe symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome

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WebMD Health News

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19<sup>th</sup> April 2012 - [Hypnosis](#) can be a highly effective treatment for the bowel disorder IBS according to new research. The treatment of IBS using hypnotherapy has been studied before but only at highly specialised "hypnotherapy centres", two new Swedish studies evaluated a form of treatment that could be used in ordinary healthcare. 40% of participants showed a reduction in symptoms.

IBS ( [irritable bowel syndrome](#)) is one of the most common digestive conditions and can cause bouts of stomach cramps, bloating, [diarrhoea](#) and [constipation](#). It's thought that 10%-20% of people experience IBS at some point and it's twice as common in women as in men.

### Control

Professor Peter Whorwell from the University of Manchester School of Medicine has been studying hypnosis for IBS for around 25 years and told BootsWebMD that the new studies back up his own findings: "These studies confirm accumulating evidence that hypnotherapy is an effective treatment for patients with irritable bowel syndrome and that its effects are sustained in the long term."

He says hypnotherapy helps both physiologically and psychologically: "Hypnosis relaxes you and reduces your [anxiety](#) but we've done studies over the years showing that hypnotherapy has a direct effect physiologically. There are studies that show it reduces acid secretion. It reduces the hypersensitivity that IBS patients have. It reduces the contractions in the gut."

He says hypnosis also helps IBS patients with bowel function, [pain](#) and bloating.

He calls the therapy gut-focused hypnosis: "The mantra is: you are controlling your gut, rather than your gut controlling you."

## Swedish studies

The studies, conducted by researchers at the University of Gothenburg, involved a total of 346 patients. They showed that hypnotherapy alleviated symptoms in 40% of those affected and that the improvement was long-term.

In one of the studies, published in the American Journal of Gastroenterology, 138 patients with IBS received hypnotherapy treatment for one hour a week over 12 weeks. The study showed that 40% demonstrated a satisfactory reduction in symptoms, compared with 12 per cent in the untreated control group.

In a press statement researcher Magnus Simrén from The Sahlgrenska Academy of Gothenburg University said: "The treatment involves the patient learning to control their symptoms through deep relaxation and individually adapted hypnotic suggestions. The idea is for the patient to then use this technique in their everyday life."

The positive effect was sustained for the entire year the study ran and led to an improvement in the quality of life experienced by the treatment group.

In the second study, which was presented in the Scandinavian Journal of Gastroenterology, 208 patients who had previously received hypnotherapy were examined. The results showed that 85 per cent of those who had been helped by hypnosis still felt the benefits of the treatment up to seven years later and that the majority still actively use the technique in their everyday lives.

"In this group, use of the healthcare system as a result of stomach and bowel symptoms had also reduced by 70%," said Magnus Simrén.

## Effective

He believes the studies show that hypnosis belongs in the arsenal of [treatments for IBS](#): "Overall, our studies show that hypnotherapy is an effective method of treating IBS."

However, researchers conclude the effectiveness of hypnotherapy is lower when the therapy is given outside highly specialised research centres.

The group CORE a charity fighting gut and [liver disease](#) says anyone thinking about hypnotherapy should use an approved therapist who should be a member of the British Medical Hypnotherapy Association.

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