

Talking To Your Patients About Gut-Directed Hypnotherapy for IBS

Talking to patients about a sensitive topic like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can be challenging, especially when introducing the idea of behavioral therapies such as gut-directed hypnotherapy (GDH). The following key talking points are intended to help explain GDH to your patients and address common questions.



1 Explain the role of the gut-brain connection in IBS

- The brain and the gut communicate with each other constantly, like a highway of information connecting two destinations.¹ Sometimes this communication can cause physical symptoms, like “butterflies in the stomach” causing someone to rush to the bathroom before a big presentation²
- This does not mean IBS is in someone’s head, but rather is a problem with the way the brain processes signals from the gut³
- Some people have overly sensitive nerves in their gut that fire in response to normal signals, like digesting a meal or gas moving through the intestines. Although barely noticeable for most people, normal sensations like these can cause severe pain for patients with IBS²



Many individuals with IBS are more sensitive to sensations in their GI tract and the brain can influence how these sensations are experienced—either by amplifying them or tuning them out, like a volume knob on a stereo.

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It can help to explain to patients that in the same way they do not feel a wristwatch they wear every day, hypnosis can also re-train their brain to not feel normal and uninformative gut sensations.

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2 Introduce gut-directed hypnotherapy

- The imagery, metaphors, and suggestions used in GDH are designed to address GI symptoms¹
- GDH appears to have a quieting effect on the gut and has been found to affect gut motility, gut secretions, and pain sensitivity²
- Sessions commonly focus on helping patients see their gut symptoms from a different perspective. This helps patients get back to their normal activities and addresses common worries such as finding a bathroom at a moment’s notice or uncomfortable bloating while at a party



This is no longer 'alternative' therapy and should be discussed up front.

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3 Review the evidence

- GDH has been used to treat IBS for nearly 40 years, and many studies have found it to improve the pain, bowel symptoms, and psychological symptoms (eg, anxiety) associated with IBS^{6,7}
- The benefits after treatment with GDH have been shown to be maintained long after completion of treatment^{6,7}
- GDH is recommended by the American College of Gastroenterology to improve IBS symptoms⁸



4 Describe the hypnosis treatment experience

- During hypnosis, patients are guided into a relaxed state of attention where they become focused on bodily sensations or specific imagery^{7,9}
- Patients may experience pleasant feelings, a sense of tranquility and protection, or a distancing from discomfort and stressors¹⁰
- Patients can be assured they don't need to feel "hypnotized" for the treatment to be effective



Patients remain in complete control of their mind and body, and hypnosis introduces a deep level of guided relaxation with targeted suggestions to improve the function of the digestive tract.

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Regulora[®] is a prescription-only digital therapeutic device that implements gut-directed hypnotherapy remotely. It is indicated to treat abdominal pain due to IBS in adults 22 years of age and older.

References: 1. Rome Foundation. Brain-Gut Psychotherapy Referral Guide. TheRomeFoundation.org. Accessed August 23, 2022. https://theromefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Rome-Foundation_GastroPsych-referral-project.pdf 2. Kinsinger S. Accessed August 30, 2022. <https://www.loyolamedicine.org/about-us/blog/how-your-brain-and-emotions-control-your-gut> 3. Chey WD et al. *Gastroenterology*. 2021;160:47-62. 4. Keefer L. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://agaperspectives.gastro.org/?p=2080#.Yt7-oS-B2o4> 5. ACG:Webinar Series. ACG Monograph on Management of IBS. Part 4: Behavioral Therapies for IBS. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://gi.org/2019/01/22/functional-gi-circle-ibs-webinar-series-recordings> 6. Palsson OS, Ballou S. *Curr Gastroenterol Rep*. 2020;22:31. 7. Black CJ et al. *Gut*. 2020;69(8):1441-1451. 8. Lacy BE et al. *Am J Gastroenterol*. 2021;116(1):17-44. 9. Palsson OS. *Int J Clin Exp Hypnosis*. 2006;54(1):51-64. 10. Palsson OS, Whitehead WE. *Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol*. 2013;11:208-216. 11. Bauza M. Accessed July 26, 2022. <https://healthblog.uofmhealth.org/digestive-health/gut-directed-hypnotherapy-ibs-ibd-gerd>

