

Hypnotherapy eases irritable bowel syndrome symptoms

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Hypnotherapy seems to be very effective for easing the distressing symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and in a goodly proportion of cases, clears up symptoms altogether, reveal experts during a wide ranging discussion of the condition in a *Frontline Gastroenterology* podcast.

Excluding certain foodstuffs may help alleviate symptoms, but usually only for a while, says Professor Roland Valori, editor of *Frontline Gastroenterology*. That's because dietary measures don't tackle the root cause of the symptoms - an overly sensitised gut. One of the best ways to do that is to use hypnotherapy, he says.

His experience of using hypnotherapy in the first 100 IBS patients treated with it showed that it significantly improved symptoms in nine out of 10 of them. It stopped symptoms altogether in four out of 10, while the remainder said they felt more in control of their symptoms. "To be frank, I have never looked back," he says.

Another option for patients is [probiotics](#), which can be very effective, says Professor Quigley of the University of Cork, Ireland, and past president of the World [Gastroenterology](#) Organisation.

But given the current regulations for food products making medicinal claims, patients are not really in a position to know which ones might work best.

Probiotic products need to contain the specific live strain and species of bacteria they claim to contain; maintain viability throughout their shelf-life; and be backed up by good quality clinical trial evidence, he says.

Doctors have tended to diagnose IBS when they couldn't find any other cause for the symptoms, making it something of a "wastebasket diagnosis," he says. It is "extremely important" to get away from that and recognise that IBS is a constellation of symptoms in its own right.

And he points out that while anxiety and depression worsen IBS symptoms, not all patients with IBS will be anxious and depressed. None the less, it is important to take into account the way in which the brain and gut can interact to increase the severity and impact of symptoms.

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