

# Benefits of cognitive behavioural therapy for IBS continue 2 years after treatment

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Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common gastrointestinal disorder affecting 10 to 20 percent of people. Abdominal pain, bloating and altered bowel habit significantly affect patient's quality of life and can force them to take days off work.

Previous research (the ACTIB trial) led by Professor Hazel Everitt at the University of Southampton in collaboration with researchers at King's College London, showed that that [cognitive behavioural therapy](#) (CBT) tailored specifically for IBS and delivered over the telephone or through an [interactive website](#) is more effective in relieving the symptoms of IBS than current standard care one year after treatment.

This 24 month follow up research published in *The Lancet Gastroenterology and Hepatology* this week has shown that benefits continue two years after treatment despite patients having no further therapy after the initial CBT course. These results are important as previously there was uncertainty whether the initial benefits could be sustained in the long term. Currently there is limited availability of CBT for IBS in a resource constrained NHS but this research indicates that easily accessible treatment could be provided to a large number of patients and provide them with effective, long-term relief.

Professor Everitt added: "the fact that both telephone and web-based CBT sessions were shown to be effective treatments is a really important and exciting discovery. Patients are able to undertake these treatments at a time convenient to them, without having to travel to clinics and we now

know that the benefits can last long term."

**More information:** Hazel A Everitt et al. Cognitive behavioural therapy for irritable bowel syndrome: 24-month follow-up of participants in the ACTIB randomised trial, *The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/S2468-1253\(19\)30243-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-1253(19)30243-2)

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