

Psychological treatments may be effective for managing irritable bowel syndrome

Clinical question	How effective are psychological interventions for the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)?
Bottom line	Psychological interventions (cognitive behavioural therapy and interpersonal psychotherapy) may be slightly superior to usual care or waiting list control conditions at the end of treatment, although the clinical significance of this is uncertain. Treatment duration and follow-up time varied from 6 weeks to 12 months. Except for a single study, these therapies were not superior to placebo and the sustainability of their effect is questionable.
Caveat	The results of this meta-analysis should be interpreted with caution due to the low methodological quality of the included studies, variability in outcome definitions and small sample sizes which resulted in considerable heterogeneity.
Context	IBS is a chronic functional gastrointestinal disorder, with an estimated prevalence in Europe of up to 24% in women and 19% in men. ¹ No consensus exists on the optimal treatment for IBS. Psychological treatments are increasingly advocated but their effectiveness is unclear.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Zildenbos IL et al. Psychological treatments for the management of irritable bowel syndrome. Cochrane Reviews 2009, Issue 1. Article No: CD006442. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006442.pub2. This review contains 25 studies involving 1858 participants.
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[References]

1. Drossman DA et al. Gastroenterology 1997;112:2120-2137

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