

IBS Explained - Relaxation Therapy

It is advisable to combine a relaxation therapy with your new diet, as eliminating stress makes the diets 100% effective, and you become happy and relaxed.

Five separate parts of the autonomic nervous system (four brain controllers and the enteric nervous system) control the small intestine. This means that your IBS symptoms are worse when the autonomic nervous system rises in activity level, and are reduced when it falls in activity level;

- Barrier symptoms (bloating, cramping), are at a maximum on eating breakfast and then reduce overnight.
- Diarrhoea symptoms mostly occur on arising as 'the morning rush'. They occur at other times only when IBS is severe.

The reason for this is that the level of activity in the autonomic nervous system is dependent on the level of adrenal hormones. When we get up in the morning our bodies release adrenal hormones to start up our automatic systems quickly. During the day, when we come under stress, additional adrenal hormones can be released. At night when we go to sleep, adrenal hormones fall to a baseline level.

A high level of adrenal hormones means that the brain uses more force when creating the IBS barrier (bloating, cramping). The enteric nervous system uses more force to move food soup (cramping, borborygmi, diarrhoea), and the valve at the end of the small intestine is easy to open (diarrhoea).

A low level of adrenal hormones means that the brain uses minimum force and any barrier is weaker or disappears, the speed of the intestine is reduced, and the valve at the end of the small intestine becomes firmly closed.

Now most of us ignore the workings of our autonomic nervous system. It is after all, an automated system, designed to need no conscious control. BUT we can exercise some control over it! We can reduce the level of adrenal hormones in our bodies by training ourselves to relax and release less of them. This minimises our IBS symptoms.

Relaxation (or stress relief) therapies come in many forms; Chi Gong, Hypnotherapy, Psychotherapy, Reiki, Tai Chi, Yoga, & many others. The one I use is from Yoga:

Yoga Relaxation (Yoga Nidra)

Yoga Nidra is a guided relaxation given live, or from an audio recording. Many Yoga schools teach a version of this technique and they may also be able to provide a CD/mp3 that you can use at home.

- Ashram Yoga <http://ashramyoga.com/shop.html> supplies mp3 files for download. I recommend *Yoga Nidra 1* with Swami Bhaktimurti.
- Satyananda Yoga Schools <http://www.satyananda.net> have CDs available and offer live instruction. I recommend the CD *Yoga Nidra & Meditation (beginners)* with Swami Satyananda.

Yoga Nidra goes like this. Choose a quiet, safe, warm place where you will not be interrupted. You need a firm surface such as a rug on the floor on which to practise. Lie down on your back with your hands by your sides, palms up and open. Your spine should be straight, your feet shoulder width apart and relaxed sideways. You may place a pillow under your head and one under the knees if necessary. If you need a rug to keep warm, use one. Once you are comfortable, start your Yoga Nidra audio and follow the instructions.

You will be given a series of awareness, breathing and visualization techniques that are designed to relax you. Each session generally lasts 30 to 45 minutes. If you find yourself going to sleep then hold one or both forearms erect during the practice (possibly with an object grasped in the hand), or even sit up against the wall. You will need to practise Yoga Nidra daily to begin with. It can be practised anytime, but is best done in late afternoon.

After a month or three you will be able to reduce your practice to 2-3 times a week, and will have reduced your adrenal hormone levels & IBS symptoms. After about five years of practise, all stress will be gone forever, and you will not have to do Yoga Nidra anymore.