

Exercise and IBS: What's the Connection?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a disorder which causes the bowels or the gut to be oversensitive. This increase in sensitivity causes a variety of uncomfortable symptoms, which includes excessive gas, stomach cramps and pains, bloating of the abdomen, constipation, and diarrhea. Obviously, these symptoms do not exactly make for the ideal life.

Unfortunately however, a large portion of IBS sufferers find that their condition cannot be fully cured. The medical profession has been unable to pinpoint exactly the causes of the syndrome. Thus, a cure has not been developed. In the absence of such a cure, however, the best thing an IBS sufferer can do is to get the best medical help available, as well as make relevant lifestyle changes. Lifestyle changes may not be able to make IBS go away completely, but they will make the symptoms easier to cope with.

A change in diet is often necessary for IBS sufferers. By eating more fiber-rich foods such as apples, peaches, cabbage, and broccoli, an IBS sufferer can reduce the impact of both constipation and diarrhea. Food items such as carrots, peas, whole-wheat bread, and pineapples are good choices as well. On the other hand, alcohol and caffeine-rich beverages should be avoided.

Aside from changes in diet, one of the most important things an IBS sufferer can do is to get some regular exercise.

Exercise is vital to the IBS sufferer for two specific reasons. First, exercise makes your body stronger. Exercise strengthens the immune system, making it less likely that other illnesses or disorders will occur.

Second, exercise is a good way to relieve stress. Many doctors believe that IBS has psychological origins. When a mind is under unusual amounts of stress, it is more prone to mental problems. Mental problems, in turn, lead to physical problems. The symptoms of IBS often begin when a person is exposed to too much stress. Stress has not been proven to cause IBS; but it certainly makes it worse. Because of this, anyone with the syndrome should do his utmost to reduce his stress levels. Exercising, of course, is one of the finest ways to accomplish this.

People who exercise regularly report a feeling of well-being after their sessions. What happens is this: the brain releases endorphins. Endorphins are natural painkillers and antidepressants, so anyone in physical or mental pain will benefit from their release. Exercise isn't only good for you; it makes you feel good as well!