

Does physical activity benefit people with irritable bowel syndrome?

Clinical Question	How effective and safe are physical activity interventions for adults diagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)?
Bottom Line	<p>The results from a small body of low- and very low-certainty evidence suggests that physical activity comprising of yoga, treadmill exercise or advice and support to increase physical activity may improve symptoms in people diagnosed with IBS. The level of improvement in IBS was clinically important with an absolute mean reduction of 69 points (95% CI 31 to 106) for total symptoms on the Irritable Bowel Syndrome Severity Scoring System (IBS-SSS).</p> <p>Physical activity did not seem to improve quality of life or abdominal pain in people diagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome.</p>
Caveat	<p>The longest duration of intervention was 24 weeks and the longest period of follow-up was six months. Therefore, the authors of this review are uncertain of the effect of longer duration interventions and the impact of short-term interventions on long-term outcomes. The extent to which the results are applicable to people with constipation-predominant IBS (IBS-C) or diarrhoea-predominant IBS (IBS-D) only is uncertain as most studies included people with mixed episodes of diarrhoea or constipation (IBS-M).</p>
Context	<p>IBS is a common chronic functional bowel disorder characterised by symptoms that include episodes of abdominal pain, bloating and changes in bowel habit.</p> <p>In healthy people, moderate physical activity reduces intestinal gas retention, improves gas transit time and reduces abdominal distension. Furthermore, physical activity may improve symptoms in people with other GI conditions such as peptic ulcers, cholelithiasis, and diverticular disease and is associated with reduced incidence of inflammatory bowel disease. Physical activity reduces colonic transit times, incomplete defecations and hard stools in people with constipation, a common symptom in people with IBS.</p>
Cochrane Systematic Review	<p>Nunan D, Cai T, Gardener AD, Ordóñez-Mena JM, Roberts NW, Thomas ET, Mahtani KR. Physical activity for treatment of irritable bowel syndrome. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2022, Issue 6. Art. No.: CD011497. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD011497.pub2. This review contains 11 trials in the review with a total of 622 participants.</p>

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Systematic review link:

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD011497.pub2/full>