

Lifestyle & Behavior Recommendations

Stress Management

Stress has been shown to play a role in the function and microbe composition of the gut, so reduction and management is crucial. In fact, for some patients it plays a bigger role than dietary, nutraceutical, or medical intervention! Some modalities for stress reduction include mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), acupuncture, and hypnotherapy.

Mindful Eating

Mindful eating is another practice to encourage patients to do. Here patients are encouraged to avoid distractions while eating or eating while very upset. Instead patients should take smaller bites to begin with, chew slowly and steadily, chewing until all contents are liquified, completely finish chewing and swallowing prior to taking another bite, and wait to drink until swallowing. All of this means the food is exposed to digestive enzymes for longer so it gets fully broken down and is easier to digest. Lastly, eating until 75 percent full puts less stress on the stomach and digestive process.

Sleep

Sleep is vitally important to the nervous system, and since the gut is nervous tissue, there is a large relationship. Studies have shown that sleep quality has direct impact on IBS patients and their gut symptoms. It has also been seen that disruption of biological rhythms in night-shift workers has been associated with GI symptoms.

Exercise

Exercise reduces stress and promotes blood flow, which are both helpful for GI conditions. Patients should tailor the intensity of their exercise to their health conditions.

Summary of behavior & lifestyle modification recommendations

Intervention	Comments
Manage stress	MBSR, acupuncture, hypnotherapy
Eat mindfully	Chew food well, eat in relaxed environment until only 3/4 full
Get adequate sleep	7-8+ hours recommended
Exercise appropriately	Depends on overall health status of patient