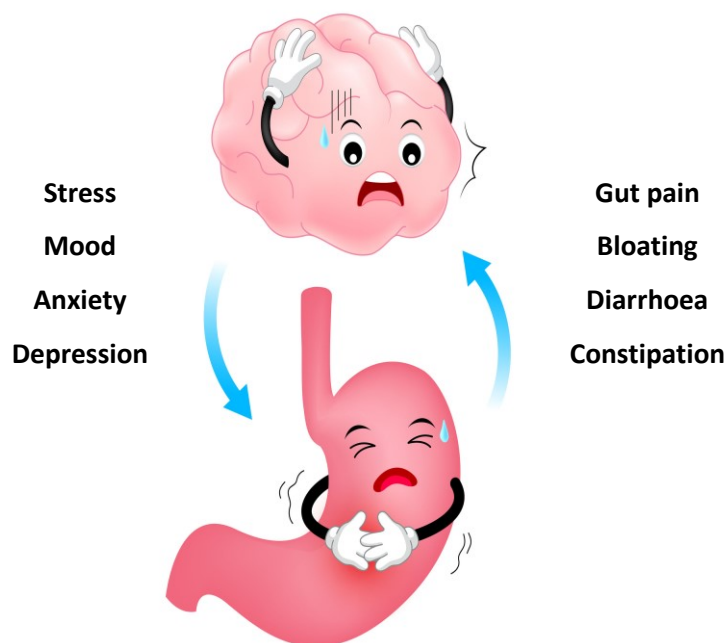


The Gut-Brain Connection in IBS

The gut and the brain are intricately linked through a two-way communication loop called the gut-brain axis. The brain influences how your gut functions, and believe it or not, your gut also effects how your brain functions.

Most people know that feeling ‘butterflies in your tummy’ or even an urgent need to use the toilet before an exam or big event such as an interview, public performance or anything else that makes you nervous or anxious. This is a perfect example of the gut-brain axis in action. The brain sends signals to the gut which tell it how to function, and the gut sends messages to the brain which tells it how it is feeling!



In general, the gut-brain connection works without our conscious control. Mostly this is a good thing as we don't need continuous conscious awareness of this interaction – it would be too much “noise” for us to deal with and we wouldn't be able to concentrate on anything else!

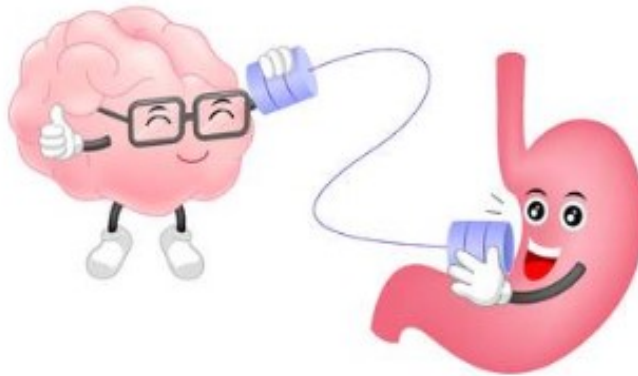
However, when you are stressed, anxious or depressed the way the brain affects your gut and the bacteria in your gut, can be a problem – and some people are more susceptible to this (more sensitive). You may feel abdominal pain or discomfort, have a change in bowel function (diarrhoea or constipation) and/or stomach bloating. It goes the other way too, where these gut symptoms cause the brain to become anxious or stressed, so it's a vicious circle. This two-way cycle is a major factor in how Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) develops and gets to be a Gut-Brain habit.

The Gut-Brain Connection in IBS

The good news is that we are now finding different ways to break the cycle of unhelpful gut-brain interaction and really improve the symptoms of IBS. By targeting the how we think, feel and act we can change the effect our brain has on pain, bowel motions and bloating. Gut-directed hypnotherapy and cognitive behavioural therapy are both very helpful in reducing gut symptoms, particularly when stress worsens the symptoms. We can also target the foods we eat to reduce the gas and chemicals which trigger the gut symptoms often by making simple lifestyle changes or starting a low FODMAP diet with a dietitian. So, if you have IBS, talk to your doctor about which approach might be best suited to your situation and lifestyle.

Gut-Directed Hypnotherapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy



Lifestyle Modification

Low FODMAP Diet

Targeted Treatments