



Support from Family

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The Importance of Support for IBS

We all know that enjoying great relationships with family and friends make us feel happier and accomplished. The benefits of supportive relationship are even more important if you suffer from IBS, according to studies. Let's review the scientific evidence and a few tips you could use to better enjoy your family and social life.

The Impact of Relationships

Like all other chronic conditions, IBS is not experienced by you alone, because you live in a social environment including your spouse, children, other family members, friends and work colleagues. These relationships can have an impact and can have both negative and positive influences on your illness.

A review of scientific studies published in 2012 in the journal "Gastroenterology Research and Practice" by researchers from New York concluded that relationships do, indeed, have an impact on IBS illness experience and may also affect how you respond to the treatment.

Various studies included in this review were confirming the benefits of relationships. For example, your general health is influenced by your marital relationship - hostile communication with a spouse have a negative impact on your health, while a great marriage can improve your health.

Furthermore, one study found that women are more vulnerable to conflicts, and equality in decision making and companionship in marriage decrease the chance of dying earlier in life. Unhappy relationships lead to depression and increased pain, while open communication between partners was found beneficial for pain management.

Based on another study that included patients with IBS from eight countries (including US, Canada, UK, China and Italy), support from relationships have a positive impact on IBS symptoms, while conflicts negatively affect this condition.

Other studies further found that IBS can influence a relationship. For example, a survey conducted in over 3000 participants (the majority of them being diagnosed with IBS) reveals that some patients believe that having IBS affects the partner's love and consideration for them, some felt that partners have difficulty with the physical aspect of the relationship, including their sex life. Another study conducted in patients with IBS and IBD (irritable bowel disease) showed that this condition increases the likelihood of poor social support.

How Can You Improve Your Relationship and Support from Family, Friends and Colleagues?

1. Try family counseling. Look for an experienced, well trained psychotherapist who can teach you how to improve your relationships, deal with marital issues and have a better outlook in life. The therapist can also help you better cope with pain and other IBS symptoms.
2. Nobody can understand your symptoms better than someone who has the same medical condition.

Support groups are great places to share your experience, learn how other cope with IBS, and make new friends. You may want to look for in-person meetings (i.e. seminars) in your area, or join an online group like the IBS Group created on Facebook

3. The better is your mood, the better are your relationships and the more support you will get from family, friends and co-workers (because they will love to be around you , and help you). On the other hand, stress, anxiety or depression not only aggravate your IBS symptoms, but will also affect your relationships. Try meditation, visualization, deep breathing, tai chi and yoga , see which technique works best for you, and use it regularly.