

# No Change in Rectal Sensitivity After Gut-Directed Hypnotherapy

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Full Title: No Change in Rectal Sensitivity After Gut-Directed Hypnotherapy in Children With Irritable Bowel Syndrome

**OBJECTIVES:** Gut-directed hypnotherapy (HT) has recently been shown to be highly effective in treating children with functional abdominal pain (FAP) and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). This study was conducted to determine the extent to which this treatment success is because of an improvement in rectal sensitivity. **METHODS:** A total of 46 patients (aged 8-18 years) with FAP (n=28) or IBS (n=18) were randomized to either 12 weeks of standard medical therapy (SMT) or HT. To assess rectal sensitivity, a pressure-controlled intermittent distension protocol (barostat) was performed before and after the therapy. **RESULTS:** Rectal sensitivity scores changed in SMT patients from 15.1+/-7.3 mm Hg at baseline to 18.6+/-8.5 mm Hg after 12 weeks of treatment (P=0.09) and in HT patients from 17.0+/-9.2 mm Hg to 22.5+/-10.1 mm Hg (P=0.09). The number of patients with rectal hypersensitivity decreased from 6 of 18 to 0 of 18 in the HT group (P=0.04) vs. 6 of 20 to 4 of 20 in the SMT group (P=0.67). No relationship was established between treatment success and rectal pain thresholds. Rectal sensitivity scores at baseline were not correlated with intensity, frequency, or duration of abdominal pain. **CONCLUSIONS:** Clinical success achieved with HT cannot be explained by improvement in rectal sensitivity. Furthermore, no association could be found between rectal barostat findings and clinical symptoms in children with FAP or IBS. Further studies are necessary to shed more light on both the role of rectal sensitivity in pediatric FAP and IBS and the mechanisms by which hypnotherapy results in improvement of clinical symptoms. *Am J Gastroenterol* advance online publication, 27 October 2009; doi:10.1038/ajg.2009.613.

*Am J Gastroenterol*. 2009 Oct 27. Vlieger AM, van den Berg MM, Menko-Frankenhuis C, Bongers ME, Tromp E, Benninga MA. Department of Pediatrics, St. Antonius Hospital, Nieuwegein, The Netherlands.

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