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Source: Vlieger AM, Menko-Frankenhuis C, Wolfkamp SC, et al. Hypnotherapy for children with functional abdominal pain or irritable bowel syndrome: a randomized controlled trial. *Gastroenterology*, 2007, 133(3), 1430–1436.

Hypnosis for Functional Abdominal Pain & Irritable Bowel Syndrome

The purpose of this study, conducted in the Netherlands, was to examine the effectiveness of hypnotherapy compared to standard medical care in a pediatric population with functional abdominal pain (FAP) or irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Patients ages 8–18 years with either FAP (n=31) or IBS (n=22) were randomized to either hypnotherapy or standard medical care. Hypnotherapy was conducted at a site distant from the academic center by a registered nurse with years of training and experience in hypnotherapy. The hypnotherapy intervention consisted of six age-appropriate 50-minute sessions over a three-month period.

The goal of the hypnotherapy was to provide suggestions for general relaxation, sleep improvement, and "ego-strengthening." Standard medical care consisted of physician-directed education, dietary advice, extra dietary fiber, and pain medication in addition to six half-hour sessions of "supportive therapy" conducted over a three-month period.

Patients in both groups maintained a pain diary card on which they recorded the daily frequency and intensity of abdominal pain and other somatic symptoms such as headache. Outcomes were assessed at baseline, one, four, eight, and 12 weeks after randomization and again six and 12 months post-therapy.

Gastrointestinal pain scores decreased significantly.