

Gut Directed Hypnotherapy Professional Information & Referral Pathway

Supporting IBS and gut–brain conditions through an evidence-informed, mind–body approach

Overview

Gut Directed Hypnotherapy (GDH) is a structured therapeutic approach designed to support individuals experiencing Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and other disorders of gut–brain interaction.

This approach focuses on regulating the gut–brain axis, the communication pathway between the central nervous system and the enteric nervous system.

GDH is used as a complementary intervention alongside medical, dietary, and psychological care.

Clinical Rationale

IBS is widely understood as a disorder of gut–brain interaction.

Dysregulation within this system may involve:

- Visceral hypersensitivity
- Altered gut motility
- Heightened stress response
- Increased central processing of gut sensations

These factors can contribute to symptom persistence and variability.

Gut-directed hypnotherapy supports the regulation of this system by addressing how gut signals are perceived and responded to within the nervous system.

Evidence-Informed Approach

Gut-directed hypnotherapy is one of the most researched psychological interventions for IBS.

Clinical studies, including randomised controlled trials, have shown that a significant proportion of individuals experience meaningful improvements in gastrointestinal symptoms and quality of life following treatment.

Reported outcomes across studies commonly indicate improvement rates in the range of approximately 70–80% of participants.

Research also suggests that these improvements may be maintained over time following completion of a structured course.

GDH is recognised within the category of gut–brain behavioural therapies and is used in clinical and hospital settings internationally.

Scope of Support

This service supports individuals presenting with:

- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
- Functional gastrointestinal disorders
- Visceral hypersensitivity
- Gut-related anxiety
- Stress-related digestive symptoms

This service is complementary and designed to integrate with existing care plans.

Clinical Approach

Sessions are structured and guided, and include:

- Clinical hypnotherapy
- Deep relaxation and focused attention
- Gut–brain axis education
- Imagery-based modulation of gut perception

- Nervous system regulation

The focus is on supporting the interpretation and regulation of gut sensations to reduce reactivity and improve overall function.

Treatment Structure

- Sessions typically run 45–60 minutes
- A course of care involves multiple sessions over several weeks
- Clients are provided with guided audio practices for integration between sessions
- Clients remain aware and responsive throughout

Referral Criteria

Suitable clients may include individuals who:

- Have a confirmed diagnosis of IBS or functional gut disorder
- Experience ongoing symptoms despite standard management
- Present with stress-related symptom patterns
- Are open to a mind–body therapeutic approach

Clients are encouraged to have an appropriate medical assessment prior to referral.

Referral Process

Referrals are welcome from:

- General Practitioners
- Gastroenterologists
- Dietitians
- Psychologists
- Allied health professionals

Referral pathways include:

- Direct practitioner referral
- Client self-referral via website
- Professional enquiry prior to referral
- Communication & Integration

With client consent, communication can be maintained with referring practitioners to support coordinated care.

This allows alignment with:

- Medical management
- Dietary interventions
- Psychological support
- Practitioner Approach

This service is grounded in:

- Evidence-informed hypnotherapy
- Mind–body integration
- Nervous system regulation
- Client-centred care

The focus is on supporting functional improvement, self-regulation, and quality of life.

Important Note

Gut-directed hypnotherapy is a complementary therapy.

It does not replace medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Contact & Referral

To refer a client or make an enquiry, please visit:

www.christinalongley.com/gut-directed-hypnotherapy

or contact directly:

withlove@christinalongley.com

Location

Kapiti Coast, New Zealand

Online and in-person sessions available

Research

Gut Directed Hypnotherapy: Key Clinical Trials

Whorwell et al. (1984)

This was the first major randomised controlled trial showing that gut-directed hypnotherapy significantly reduced IBS symptoms such as pain, bloating, and bowel dysfunction compared to standard care. It established hypnotherapy as a credible clinical intervention.

Link: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/6150275/>

Lindfors et al. (2012)

This study demonstrated that gut-directed hypnotherapy is effective in real-world clinical settings, not just specialist centres. Patients showed significant symptom improvement after treatment.

Link: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21971535/>

Flik et al. (2019)

A large trial comparing individual and group hypnotherapy. Both formats were effective, showing that group delivery is a viable and scalable option for treating IBS.

Link: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253\(18\)30310-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253(18)30310-8/fulltext)

Peters et al. (2016)

This trial compared hypnotherapy with a low FODMAP diet. Results showed both approaches were similarly effective, supporting hypnotherapy as a non-dietary treatment option.

Link: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27397586/>

Vlieger et al. (2007, follow-up 2012)

In children with IBS, hypnotherapy showed significantly higher long-term success rates compared to standard medical care, with many maintaining improvement years later.

Link:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0016508507016290>

Rutten et al. (2017)

This study compared therapist-delivered hypnotherapy with home-based audio sessions. Both were effective, showing that hypnotherapy can be delivered flexibly.

Link:

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2613403>

Berry et al. (2023)

A digital hypnotherapy trial. While primary outcomes were mixed, many patients still experienced meaningful reductions in abdominal pain, supporting the potential of app-based delivery.

Link:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1542356523005001>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6850508/>

Randomised clinical trial: the efficacy of gut-directed hypnotherapy is similar to that of the low FODMAP diet for the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27397586/>

Effects of Gut-Directed Hypnotherapy on IBS in Different Clinical Settings—Results From Two Randomised, Controlled Trials

https://journals.lww.com/ajg/abstract/2012/02000/effects_of_gut_directed_hypnotherapy_on_ibs_in.22.aspx

Gut-directed hypnotherapy significantly augments clinical remission in quiescent ulcerative colitis

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/apt.12449>

Long-Term Follow-Up of Gut-Directed Hypnotherapy vs. Standard Care in Children With Functional Abdominal Pain or Irritable Bowel Syndrome

https://journals.lww.com/ajg/abstract/2012/04000/long_term_follow_up_of_gut_directed_hypnotherapy.24.aspx

Controlled trial of hypnotherapy in the treatment of severe refractory irritable-bowel syndrome

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/6150275/>

Effects of gut-directed hypnotherapy on IBS in different clinical settings: results from two randomised, controlled trials

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21971535/>

Efficacy of individual and group hypnotherapy in irritable bowel syndrome (IMAGINE): a multicentre randomised controlled trial

https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253%2818%2930310-8/abstract?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Randomised clinical trial: the efficacy of gut-directed hypnotherapy is similar to that of the low FODMAP diet for the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome

https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253%2818%2930310-8/abstract?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Home-Based Hypnotherapy Self-exercises vs Individual Hypnotherapy With a Therapist for Treatment of Pediatric Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Functional Abdominal Pain, or Functional Abdominal Pain Syndrome: A Randomised Clinical Trial

https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253%2818%2930310-8/abstract?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Randomised clinical trial: individual versus group hypnotherapy for irritable bowel syndrome

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35505463/>