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Digestive and Abdominal Symptom Control Program

Stress related stomach and intestinal can be lessened, and possibly eliminated, by stress management techniques.

Written by L. John Mason, Author of the Bestselling book, Guide [To Stress Reduction](#).

Digestive & Abdominal symptoms can be confused with serious, sometimes life threatening physical disorders! Please consult your physician to determine the source of your symptoms.

Stomach tension ("knots"), ulcers or pre-ulcerous conditions, constipation, diarrhea, colitis, sexual dysfunction (70% of the time), poor digestion/absorption, and hyper secretion of gastric acid are the major physical symptoms which can link stress and abdominal problems. These conditions are not always created by stress, but can be made worse in stressful situations. People inherit characteristics both physically and emotionally that increase the possibilities of these types of symptoms. However, this does not mean that you are pre-destined to suffer from these complaints. You may need to change your lifestyle with behavioral techniques that can help you to get back in control of the way your body responds to stress and major life changes.

The keys to controlling abdominal complaints are:

- Breathe slowly/diaphragmatically
- Remain in the present... in your body, in a positive way
- Avoid being perfectionistic and over-controlling
- Regular deep relaxation with Biofeedback Temperature monitoring
- Use the special relaxation tape regularly!
- Learn to warm your hands and feet
- Avoid caffeine and stimulants
- Regular aerobic exercise
- Positive self-talk... not negative ruminations

Learn to breathe diaphragmatically

- Place a hand over your upper abdomen.
- Push it OUT as you inhale.
- Let in move IN as you exhale.
- Let your chest, shoulder, neck, and back relax as you breathe.
- Only on a very deep breath should these parts move in the breath.



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Use Self Guided Exercises'

- Use the any of the stress management audio self guided programs 1-3 times per day for 8-12 weeks.
- I recommend the Autogenic Training CD (Product #102), the High Blood Pressure CD (Product # 203), or Stress Management for GI Complaints (Product #207).
- After achieving a state of deep relaxation, encourage slow, regular diaphragmatic breathing, increased control, and maintain a present/positive mental awareness.
- Use the StressDots or some sort of temperature training biofeedback device on your hands to learn how to warm your hands with relaxation. When you can consistently get above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (93-95 degrees is ideal) then you can begin to master warming your feet to 90 degrees.

When you can "let go" by relaxing and warming your hands and feet, you will be able to control if not prevent the panic/anxiety episodes that can contribute to your digestive complaints. Then you must develop the confidence in your control so the fear of digestive/abdominal disorders will not control your life. This skill can teach you how to minimize, if not eliminate, your symptoms.

Regular Exercise

Regular exercise will help you to work off the effects of life's stresses. 3-5 times per week of regular exercise that can elevate your heart rate for 15-45 minutes would be best. Check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program if you have been inactive for a long while. Even though elevating your heart rate can be a little scary, the release of tensions and the strengthening of your cardiovascular system will have great benefits.

Eat Regular Meals

Low fat and complex carbohydrates are better than fast foods with lots of sugar. AVOID CAFFEINE and other stimulants. Caffeine is found in coffee, black teas, cola drinks, chocolate, some over-the-counter pain medications, and other foods/drugs. Caffeine is an irritant to your digestive track. Read labels. Eating as closely as you can to natural foods (lots of: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, etc.) will benefit any one (some people can not tolerate raw fruits and vegetables, however these may be very healthful over time.) You may want to avoid spicy foods and eating later in the evening to help control digestive symptoms.



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Positive Self-Talk

Practice positive self-talk. Do not let your fears escalate into you losing control of your body and your mind. By breathing slowly and staying in your body, in present time, you avoid falling into the negative pattern of fear and panic which can intensify if not create digestive symptoms. Accept that you and everyone else has imperfections that allow us to be "human" and offer us an opportunity to develop in yet more positive ways. Learn from mistakes, but you do not have to beat yourself with these flaws. People who have insecurities that make them "overcontrol" other people can find long term difficulties in quality of life and health.

Remember you can get back in control of your body and your life! You must make this a priority so you can avoid being a victim to this set of scary symptoms.

Your abdominal symptoms are not always your enemy. These responses are designed to protect you and may teach you something about the stresses and transitions you are going through. Denial of these challenges only creates a more stubborn set of symptoms that can be more debilitating.

This program works best preventively and takes time to master. Be patient! Your skills will develop and you will be able to learn to control the stress related components of your digestive disorder. You will be able to minimize if not eliminate these symptoms through awareness and confidence in your developing relaxation skills.