

[IMAGE]

Exercise, Stress and Bowel Disease: A Link?

By Editorial Staff

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is no laughing matter: More than 1 million Americans currently suffer from IBD, a constellation of bowel conditions that includes Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. Daily life can be miserable for IBD sufferers, who experience symptoms such as abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, rectal bleeding, severe pelvic cramping, weight loss and anemia.

While steroids and antibiotics are front-line treatment strategies for IBD to help control symptoms, exercise and stress reduction may be tied to symptom suppression. A recent study emphasizes the potential connection between stress, exercise and IBD, finding that colitis-afflicted mice experienced fewer symptoms when allowed to run voluntarily (at any time) on an exercise wheel. Interestingly, when the mice were *forced* to run on the wheel, their colitis symptoms got worse, which perhaps suggests that stress (presumably caused by not having control over when the mice exercised) or overexercising (the mice who ran on the wheel voluntarily may have done so less than those forced to run) may increase IBD symptoms.

IBD - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark A great deal more research needs to be done, of course, and on human subjects, but this study definitely provides food for thought in terms of how IBD sufferers may be able to modify behavior – rather than relying on medication – to control their symptoms, which can be debilitating. Talk to your doctor to learn more about inflammatory bowel disease, particularly in you are experiencing symptoms, and discuss the potential drugless options for managing your condition.

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