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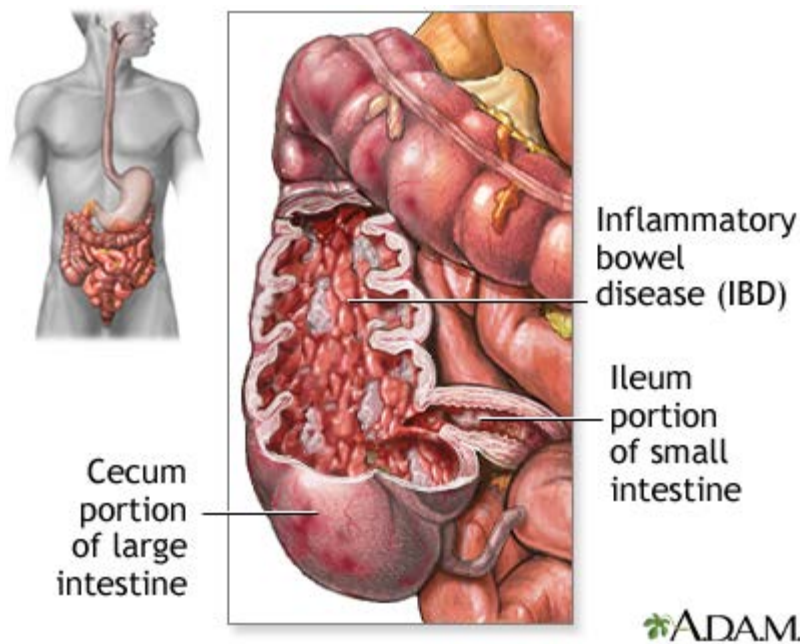
Crohn's disease

Inflammatory bowel disease - Crohn's disease; Regional enteritis; Ileitis; Granulomatous ileocolitis; IBD- Crohn's disease

Last reviewed: October 29, 2012.

Crohn's disease is a form of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). It usually affects the intestines, but may occur anywhere from the mouth to the end of the rectum (anus).

[Ulcerative colitis](#) is a related condition.



Causes, incidence, and risk factors

The exact cause of Crohn's disease is unknown. It is a condition that occurs when your body's immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys healthy body tissue (autoimmune disorder).

People with Crohn's disease have ongoing (chronic) inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract (GI tract). Crohn's disease may involve the small intestine, the large intestine, the rectum, or the mouth. The inflammation causes the intestinal wall to become thick.

The following seem to play a role in Crohn's disease:

- Your genes and family history (people of Jewish descent are at higher risk)

- Environmental factors
- Tendency of your body to over-react to normal bacteria in the intestines
- Smoking

Crohn's disease may occur at any age. It usually occurs in people between ages 15 - 35.

Symptoms

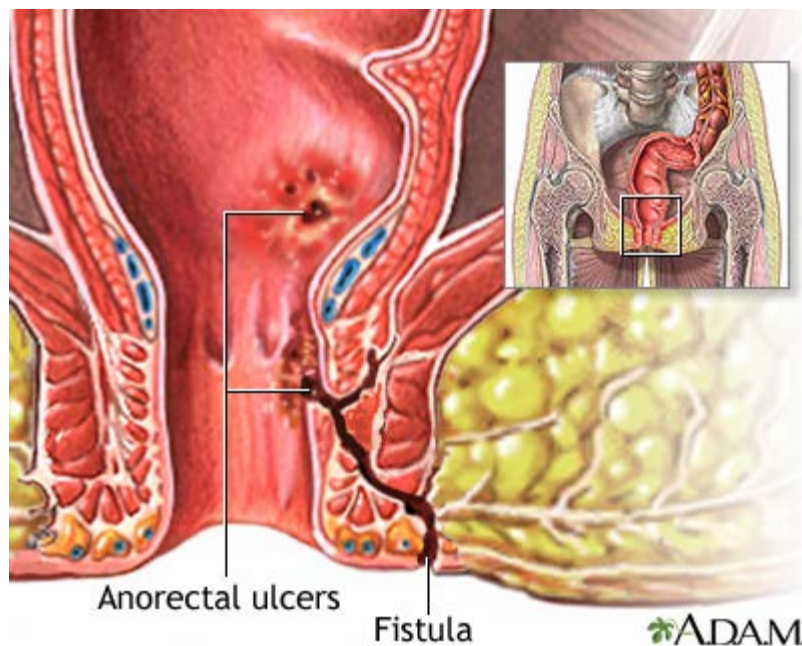
Symptoms depend on what part of the gastrointestinal tract is affected. Symptoms range from mild to severe, and can come and go with periods of flare-ups.

The main symptoms of Crohn's disease are:

- Crampy [abdominal \(belly area\) pain](#)
- [Fever](#)
- Fatigue
- [Loss of appetite](#)
- Pain with passing stool ([tenesmus](#))
- Persistent, watery [diarrhea](#)
- [Weight loss](#)

Other symptoms may include:

- [Constipation](#)
- Eye inflammation
- [Fistulas](#) (usually around the rectal area, may cause draining of pus, mucus, or stools)
- [Joint pain](#) and swelling
- Mouth ulcers
- Rectal bleeding and [bloody stools](#)
- Skin lumps or sores (ulcers)
- [Swollen gums](#)



Signs and tests

A physical examination may reveal an [abdominal mass](#) or tenderness, skin rash, swollen joints, or mouth ulcers.

Tests to diagnose Crohn's disease include:

- [Barium enema](#) or [upper GI series](#)
- [Colonoscopy](#) or [sigmoidoscopy](#)
- [Computed tomography \(CT scan\) of the abdomen](#)
- [Endoscopy](#), including capsule endoscopy
- [Magnetic resonance imaging \(MRI\) of the abdomen](#)
- [Enteroscopy](#)

A [stool culture](#) may be done to rule out other possible causes of the symptoms.

This disease may also alter the results of the following tests:

- [Albumin](#)
- C-reactive protein
- Erythrocyte sedimentation rate
- [Fecal fat](#)
- Hemoglobin
- Liver function tests
- [White blood cell count](#)

Treatment

DIET AND NUTRITION

You should eat a well-balanced, healthy diet. Include enough calories, protein, and nutrients from a variety of food groups.

No specific diet has been shown to make Crohn's symptoms better or worse. Specific food problems may vary from person to person.

However, certain types of foods can make diarrhea and gas worse. To help ease symptoms, try:

- Eating small amounts of food throughout the day.
- Drinking lots of water (drink small amounts often throughout the day).
- Avoiding high-fiber foods (bran, beans, nuts, seeds, and popcorn).
- Avoiding fatty, greasy or fried foods and sauces (butter, margarine, and heavy cream).
- Limiting dairy products if you have problems digesting dairy fats. Try low-lactose cheeses, such as Swiss and cheddar, and an enzyme product, such as Lactaid, to help break down lactose.
- Avoiding foods that you know cause gas, such as beans.

Ask your doctor about extra vitamins and minerals you may need:

- Iron supplements (if you are anemic)
- Calcium and [vitamin D](#) supplements to help keep your bones strong
- Vitamin B12 to prevent anemia

STRESS

You may feel worried, embarrassed, or even sad and depressed about having a bowel disease. Other stressful events in your life,

such as moving, a job loss, or the loss of a loved one can worsen digestive problems.

Ask your doctor or nurse for tips on how to manage your stress.

MEDICATIONS

You can take medication to treat very bad diarrhea. [Loperamide](#) (Imodium) can be bought without a prescription. Always talk to your doctor or nurse before using these drugs.

Other medicines to help with symptoms include:

- Fiber supplements may help your symptoms. You can buy psyllium powder (Metamucil) or methylcellulose (Citrucel) without a prescription. Ask your doctor about these products and all laxative medicines.
- [Acetaminophen](#) (Tylenol) for mild pain. Avoid drugs such as [aspirin](#), [ibuprofen](#) (Advil, Motrin), or [naproxen](#) (Aleve, Naprosyn) which can make your symptoms worse.

Your doctor may also give you a prescription for stronger pain medicines, such as:

- Aminosalicylates (5-ASAs) - medicines that help control mild to moderate symptoms. Some forms of the drug are taken by mouth; others must be given rectally.
- Corticosteroids ([prednisone](#) and [methylprednisolone](#)) - treat moderate to severe Crohn's disease. They may be taken by mouth or inserted into the rectum.
- Medicines such as [azathioprine](#) or [6-mercaptopurine](#) - quiet the immune system's reaction.
- Antibiotics - treat abscesses or fistulas.
- Biologic therapy - used for severe Crohn's disease that does not respond to any other types of medication. Medicines in this group include [Infliximab](#) (Remicade) and [adalimumab](#) (Humira), [certolizumab](#) (Cimzia), and [natalizumab](#) (Tysabri).

SURGERY

Some people with Crohn's disease may need surgery to remove a damaged or diseased part of the intestine ([bowel resection](#)). In some cases the entire large intestine (colon) is removed, with or without the rectum.

Patients who have Crohn's disease that does not respond to medications may need surgery to treat problems such as:

- Bleeding (hemorrhage)
- Failure to grow (in children)
- Fistulas (abnormal connections between the intestines and another area of the body)
- Infections (abscesses)
- Narrowing (strictures) of the intestine

Surgeries that may be done include:

- [Ileostomy](#)
- [Large bowel resection](#)
- [Small bowel resection](#)
- [Total abdominal colectomy](#)
- [Total proctocolectomy with ileostomy](#)

Support Groups

The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of American offers support groups throughout the United States.

Expectations (prognosis)

There is no cure for Crohn's disease. The condition is marked by periods of improvement followed by flare-ups of symptoms.

If you stop or change your medications for any reason, let your doctor know right away.

You have a higher risk for small bowel and colon cancer if you have Crohn's disease.

Complications

- Abscess
- [Bowel obstructions](#)
- [Erythema nodosum](#)
- Fistulas in the following areas:
 - Bladder
 - Skin
 - Vagina
- Slow growth and sexual development in children
- Swelling of the joints
- Lesions in the eye
- Nutritional deficiency (commonly [vitamin B12](#) deficiency)
- Pyoderma gangrenosum

Calling your health care provider

Call for an appointment with your health care provider if:

- You have very bad abdominal pain
- You cannot control your diarrhea with diet changes and drugs
- You have lost weight, or a child is not gaining weight
- You have rectal bleeding, drainage, or sores
- You have a fever that lasts for more than 2 or 3 days, or a fever higher than 100.4°F without an illness
- You have nausea and vomiting that lasts for more than a day
- You have skin sores or lesions that do not heal
- You have joint pain that prevents you from doing your everyday activities
- You have side effects from any drugs prescribed for your condition

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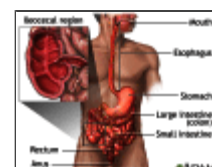
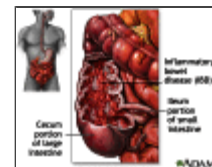
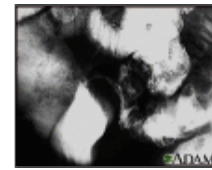
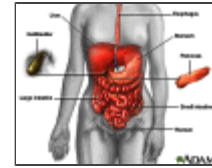


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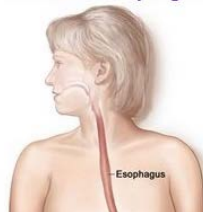
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Presentation



Inflammatory bowel disease

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Crohn's Disease

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