



Crohn's Disease

Crohn's disease is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) that can affect any part of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, from the mouth to the anus. However, it most commonly impacts the ileum, the end of the small intestine, and the beginning of the colon. This disease is named after Dr. Burrill B. Crohn, who first described the condition in 1932, along with his colleagues Dr. Leon Ginzburg and Dr. Gordon D. Oppenheimer. While Crohn's disease can be diagnosed at any age, it is most frequently identified in adolescents and adults between the ages of 15 and 35.

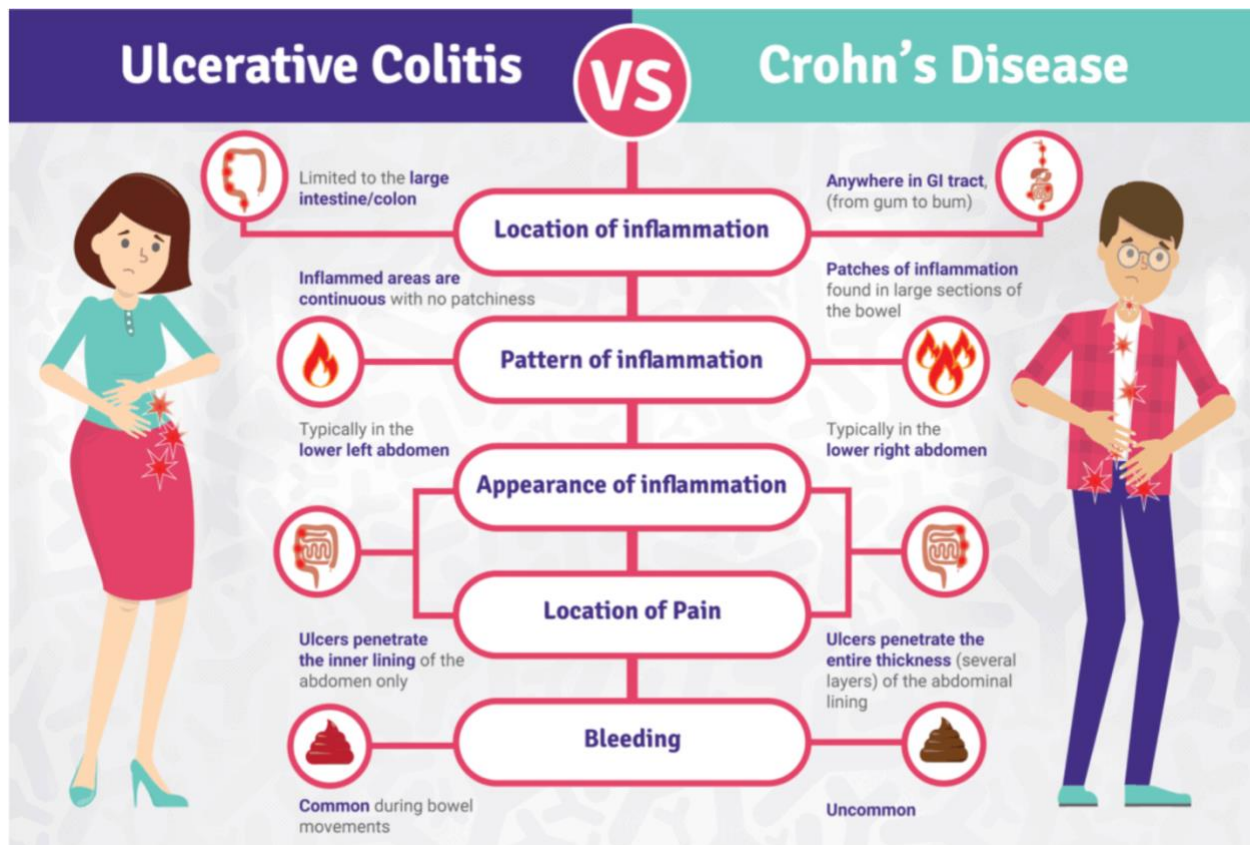
What Causes Crohn's Disease?

The exact cause of Crohn's disease is still unknown, but it is believed to result from an abnormal immune system response. Normally, the immune system defends the body from harmful bacteria and viruses. However, in people with Crohn's disease, the immune system can mistake beneficial bacteria and food in the gut for foreign substances and attack them, leading to inflammation.

Genetics also plays a significant role in the development of Crohn's disease. It is more common in people with family members with the disease, indicating a hereditary component. Certain environmental factors, such as a high-fat diet or smoking, can increase the risk of developing Crohn's disease.

What Are the Symptoms of Crohn's Disease?

Symptoms of Crohn's disease can vary significantly from person to person, ranging from mild to severe. They often develop gradually but can also appear suddenly, without warning. Some people may also experience periods of remission, where they have no signs or symptoms of the disease. Common symptoms include diarrhea, fever, fatigue, abdominal pain, cramping, blood in the stool, mouth sores, reduced appetite, and weight loss. In severe cases, individuals may experience inflammation of the skin, eyes, and joints; inflammation of the liver or bile ducts; and delayed growth or sexual development in children. If you experience persistent changes in your bowel habits or any signs and symptoms of Crohn's disease, such as an unexplained fever lasting more than a day or two or unexplained weight loss, it's important to seek medical attention.



How is Crohn's Disease Diagnosed?

The diagnosis of Crohn's disease typically involves a combination of lab tests, imaging studies, and endoscopic procedures to confirm the presence of inflammation and rule out other possible causes of symptoms.

What is the Treatment

Treatment for Crohn's disease usually focuses on reducing inflammation, managing symptoms, and achieving long-term remission. This can involve a combination of medication, lifestyle changes, and, in some cases, surgery.

Medications used to treat Crohn's disease include:

Anti-inflammatory drugs: These are often the first step in treatment. They have oral 5-aminosalicylates, such as sulfasalazine, which can help control inflammation.

Corticosteroids: These can help reduce inflammation in your body, but they have many side effects, including a puffy face, excessive facial hair, night sweats, insomnia, and hyperactivity.

More severe side effects include type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, bone fractures, cataracts, glaucoma, and an increased chance of infection.

Immune system suppressors: These drugs also reduce inflammation, but they do so by taming the immune response. Medicines in this category include azathioprine, mercaptopurine, infliximab, adalimumab, certolizumab, methotrexate, natalizumab, vedolizumab, and ustekinumab.

Antibiotics: Antibiotics can reduce the amount of drainage and sometimes heal fistulas and abscesses in people with Crohn's disease. Some researchers also believe that antibiotics help reduce harmful intestinal bacteria that may play a role in activating the intestinal immune system, leading to inflammation.

Lifestyle changes can also play a significant role in managing Crohn's disease. These can include dietary modifications, regular exercise, and smoking cessation. For instance, a diet low in fiber and fat can help reduce symptoms, and drinking plenty of fluids can help prevent dehydration associated with diarrhea. Regular exercise can also help reduce stress, maintain a healthy weight, and promote regular bowel function.

Surgery is sometimes an option. The doctor may recommend surgery if diet, lifestyle changes, drug therapy, or other treatments don't relieve your signs and symptoms. During surgery, the damaged portion of your digestive tract is removed, and the healthy sections are reconnected. Surgery does not cure Crohn's, but it can often lead to a long-term remission period and may be used to alleviate symptoms such as bleeding, strictures, or perforations in the intestine.

In conclusion, Crohn's disease is a complex, chronic inflammatory condition primarily affecting the digestive tract. It involves a combination of immune, genetic, and environmental factors. While it can be a challenging condition to live with, effective treatments are available that can help manage symptoms and improve quality of life. If you have symptoms of Crohn's disease, it's essential to seek medical attention for a proper diagnosis and treatment plan.

More information is available at the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation.

<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/>

Center For Digestive Health & Nutrition
725 Cherrington Parkway • Moon Township, PA 15108
412.262.1000 • www.gihealth.com • IG: @thedigestivetract

The Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition is a private medical practice comprised of experienced Gastroenterologists, Nurse Practitioners, and staff members dedicated to preventing and treating digestive disorders. Our physicians have been serving the needs of those in Western Pennsylvania and surrounding areas since 1977, having cared for tens of thousands of individuals with digestive problems. Our mission is to deliver high-quality gastroenterology services efficiently and cost-consciously. We realize the very sensitive nature of GI illness and understand the necessity to provide our services in an environment that stresses patient privacy and confidentiality and where patient satisfaction is the goal. Appointments can be conveniently scheduled online via our website above. Learn more about digestive issues on Instagram @thedigestivetract

DISCLAIMER: The information on this website is to provide general information. The information on this website does NOT reflect definitive medical advice, and self-diagnoses should not be made based on information obtained online. It is important to consult a physician for a consultation and examination regarding ANY and ALL symptoms or signs as they may signify a serious illness or condition. An accurate diagnosis and treatment plan should only be made by a qualified doctor to exclude a serious condition.