What is Inflammatory Bowel Disease?

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) causes inflammation in the intestine and/or the colon often resulting in pain, swelling, diarrhea and in some cases, rectal bleeding. Crohn’s Disease and ulcerative colitis are the two most common forms of IBD. Although the symptoms are similar, they are different conditions and may require different treatment.

When to See a Doctor

Occasional abdominal distress such as cramping, bloating or diarrhea may result from a number of causes and, unless persistent, generally do not indicate digestive disease. If your symptoms have not resolved within a few days or if they recur, it’s time for a thorough evaluation and consultation with a specialist.

Diagnosis and Testing

The best diagnostic “test” for any condition is a thorough exam and consultation with a physician, including a review of personal and family history. In addition, a physician may recommend the following tests or procedures to confirm your IBD diagnosis or and/or rule out other possible causes.

- Blood tests
- Imaging tests
- Stool tests
- Colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy
- Endoscopy or capsule endoscopy

Symptoms May Include:

- Abdominal pain or discomfort
- Anemia
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Rectal pain or bleeding
- Unexplained weight loss

Risk Factors Include:

- Genetics: first degree relative with Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis
- Ethnicity: Jewish heritage
**Treatment and Prevention**

Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis cannot be prevented but with the help of a physician many patients can manage their symptoms using one or more treatment options, which may include:

- Lifestyle changes
- Drug therapy
- Nutritional supplements
- Surgery

**Diet and IBD**

Poor dietary habits and/or stress may aggravate Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis but they do not cause disease on their own. Some patients experience relief by following a special diet or engaging in stress-relieving practices or activities, such as exercise or meditation. The following may be especially helpful during disease flare ups:

- Eat smaller meals at more frequent intervals
- Reduce the amount of greasy or fried foods in your diet
- Limit consumption of milk or milk products
- Restrict your intake of certain high-fiber foods such as nuts, seeds, corn and popcorn

**A Message from the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation of America**

While both Crohn’s and colitis present their own challenges and complications, it is still possible to live a full, rewarding, happy, and productive life. While every patient is different and no one experiences symptoms exactly the same, everyone can find a combination of medical treatments and behaviors to get the most out of life. To learn more about making the right choices, building a network of supportive friends and loved ones, connecting with a community of peers who share your condition, and balancing the demands of your health with financial reality, visit [www.ccfa.org](http://www.ccfa.org).

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