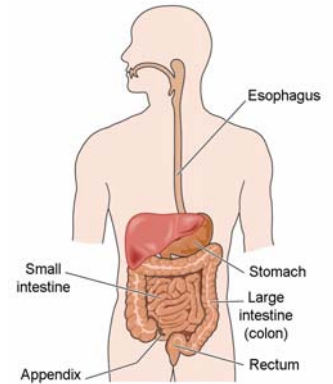


PATIENT'S GUIDE TO CROHN'S DISEASE

WHAT IS CROHN'S DISEASE?

Crohn's disease, named after Dr. Burril B. Crohn who first described the disease in 1932, is a chronic disorder that causes inflammation of the digestive or gastrointestinal (GI) tract. It most often affects the small intestine and/or colon; however, it can involve any area of the GI tract from the mouth to the anus. There are multiple layers of the small intestine and all may be inflamed in individuals with Crohn's disease. In most cases, there is normal healthy bowel in between patches of diseased bowel. Crohn's and a similar disease, ulcerative colitis, are grouped under the category of diseases known as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). It is estimated that nearly half of a million Americans have Crohn's disease. Crohn's disease affects both males and females primarily between the ages of 15-35.

Crohn's disease is associated with a slightly increased risk of small intestinal and colorectal cancer.



SYMPTOMS

The main symptoms of Crohn's disease include:

Belly pain. The pain often is described as cramping and intermittent, and the belly may be sore when touched. Belly pain may turn to a dull, constant ache as the condition gets worse.

Diarrhea. Some people may have diarrhea 10 to 20 times a day. They may wake up at night and need to go to the bathroom. Crohn's disease may cause blood in stools, but not always.

Loss of appetite. Abdominal pain and cramping and the inflammatory reaction in the wall of your bowel can affect your appetite.

Fever. In severe cases, fever or other symptoms that affect the entire body may develop. A high fever may mean that you have an infection, such as an abscess.

Weight loss. Ongoing symptoms, such as diarrhea, can lead to weight loss.

Too few red blood cells (anemia). Some people with Crohn's disease develop anemia because of low iron levels caused by bloody stools or the intestinal inflammation itself.

Small tears in the anus (anal fissures) that may go away, but come back again.

Because Crohn's disease involves the immune system, you also may have symptoms outside the digestive tract. These may include joint pain, eye problems, a skin rash, or liver disease.

TREATMENT

The treatment for Crohn's disease depends on the location and severity of disease, complications and response to previous treatment.

The goals of treatment are to control inflammation, correct nutritional deficiencies, and relieve symptoms such as abdominal pain, diarrhea, and rectal bleeding. The main treatment alternatives are drugs, nutritional supplements or surgery. Unfortunately, there is no cure for Crohn's disease, however, treatment will help with the symptoms. Only a physician can determine the most appropriate treatment.

Drug Therapy: Medication is usually prescribed to help reduce inflammation. In addition, your doctor may prescribe a drug to help suppress or modify the immune system and an antibiotic to treat bacterial overgrowth.

Nutrition: Attention to your diet is critical in reducing symptoms and maintaining good nutritional status. Many times individuals with Crohn's disease experience loss of appetite and have increased caloric needs. These individuals may benefit from the inclusion of a nutritional supplement to their diet. Generally speaking, soft and bland foods are tolerated better than hot and spicy foods.

Surgery: Surgery may be recommended when medication is no longer effective in controlling the symptoms of Crohn's disease. It may be useful in repairing fistulas or removing bowel obstructions. During surgery the surgeon will remove the affected portion of the bowel and sew together the two remaining segments again, which is also known as a bowel resection.

