

## INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE (IBD)

# What is Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)?

- ▶ Inflammatory bowel disease, or IBD, is when there is inflammation, or swelling, in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract and a lifelong immune response.
- ▶ **IBD causes the body and immune system to think that food, bacteria and other needed things in the intestine are not supposed to be there. With this, the body attacks the cells of the bowels, causing inflammation that does not easily go away.**
- ▶ IBD affects both men and women.
- ▶ IBD is often found in people in their late teens and 20s, though it can be found at any age.
- ▶ Symptoms of IBD can differ from person to person and depend on the type of inflammatory bowel disease.
- ▶ There are two main types of inflammatory bowel disease: **ulcerative colitis** and **Crohn's disease**.
  - **Ulcerative colitis (UC)**
    - Inflammation in the colon or rectum
    - Can cause:
      - Diarrhea (loose stool)
      - Cramps
      - Rectal bleeding



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- **Crohn's disease (CD):**
  - Inflammation or ulceration throughout the GI tract
  - Can cause:
    - Cramps/belly pain (often in the lower right side)
    - Diarrhea
    - Weight loss
    - Bleeding
  
- ▶ Both Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are illnesses with times of remission (when you feel well) and relapse (when you feel ill).
  
- ▶ There are many types of treatment plans that your doctor can order to control the symptoms of IBD, and each of these has specific actions and side effects.
  
- ▶ About 15 to 30 percent of patients with IBD have a family member with the disease. There is research underway to find out if a certain gene or a group of genes makes a person more likely to get IBD.
  
- ▶ There is little proof that stress causes IBD. As with other illnesses, stress may make symptoms worse. Stress management might be suggested.
  
- ▶ Treatments for IBD often include medications, nutrition, emotional support or surgery, based on the type of IBD.
  
- ▶ While what you eat does not cause IBD, foods can cause or worsen symptoms when the disease is active.
  - Your doctor may do a nutritional assessment to find out if you are taking in enough calories, vitamins and minerals.



## Coping With IBD

Though IBD is a long-term health issue that has times of remission and relapse, most people have a normal life span and a good quality of life.

For those who have chronic and continuing symptoms, here are a few tips to try:

- Know your body and how IBD affects you.
- Learn to care for yourself — have control over those things you can control.
- Build a support system that works for you: family, friends and support groups.
- Be sure to follow instructions from your medical team.

## Additional Resources

- [www.ccfa.org](http://www.ccfa.org)
- Local hospital support groups

For more details on testing, treatment and coping, please visit the Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis materials at [www.gastro.org/patient-care](http://www.gastro.org/patient-care).

