

Crohn's Disease

Crohn's disease is a type of IBD (inflammatory bowel disease) that causes inflammation of the digestive tract. Any part of the digestive tract can be affected. Crohn's is often found in the intestines, especially the area where the small intestine and the colon meet. All layers of the digestive tract may be inflamed, including the lining and inner and outer walls. No one knows yet what causes IBD. But there are a number of treatment options. These can help people with Crohn's lead full, active lives.

Symptoms and Diagnosis of Crohn's Disease

The symptoms of Crohn's can include:

- Abdominal pain and bloating after meals
- Sores in the anal area
- High fever and chills
- Loss of appetite; possible weight loss
- Bloody diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Symptoms may get worse after meals

The following diagnostic tests may be given in an attempt to diagnose Crohn's:

- Barium enema, upper GI series, and small bowel series. These produce a series of x-rays that give your doctor a better look at your digestive tract.
- Endoscopy to look directly into your rectum or colon. A sample of tissue (biopsy) is sometimes taken for a later study. This test uses a thin, flexible tube to take video pictures of your digestive tract.
- Blood or stool test to help rule out other problems.
- CT scan to look for problems in your digestive tract. This test uses x-rays and computers to create images of your digestive tract.

Treatment

There is no cure for Crohn's Disease, but the symptoms can be treated. Avoid any food that makes your symptoms worse. High-fiber foods and high-fat foods cause symptoms in many people. Keep track of the foods that worsen your symptoms. Along with following your doctors advice, the following medications may be incorporated into your treatment:

- A type of anti-inflammatory medication (called 5-ASA compounds) to help reduce intestinal swelling and discomfort.
- Corticosteroids to help reduce inflammation.
- Antibiotics to fight bacteria that may lead to infection.
- Medications to control your body's immune system.

The Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America can provide you with more information about the disease and also give you information about support groups in your area. Their phone number is 1-800-932-2423.