

Lifestyle Management of Crohn's Disease



Crohn's disease is a type of inflammatory bowel disease. You can lead a full life even if you have Crohn's disease. Focus on keeping your symptoms under control. Don't let this disease isolate you. By planning ahead and working with support groups, you can find ways to cope. You may even help others who have Crohn's disease.

Have a plan

Make this your goal—"Crohn's disease won't keep me from the activities I enjoy." You may need to do some planning to reach that goal. By staying positive, you can help make sure you're in control—not the disease. Here are some other tips:

- Know where to find clean bathrooms.
- Eat more small meals instead of 3 big meals, especially when you won't have easy access to bathrooms.
- Reduce the amount of fried and greasy foods in your diet.
- Limit how much milk or milk products you have.
- If you've had a recent flare-up, eat foods that you know will limit your symptoms.
- Get some exercise every day.
- Take a stress reduction class.
- Don't smoke. Smoking makes Crohn's disease symptoms worse.

If you're going on a long trip, discuss your plans with your healthcare provider. They can teach you what to do if you have a flare-up while on the road.

Find a support group



Crohn's disease support groups can help you with concerns you may have. Other people have felt much of what you may be feeling. Just knowing that you're not alone can be a great comfort. Someone in a support group may offer a travel tip or a coping skill that's perfect for you. And it's also a great feeling to know that you can help someone else who has Crohn's disease.

Contact the [Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America at www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org](http://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org) or 800-932-2423 for more information.

Managing nutrition

You may be able to eat most foods until you have a flare-up. And like everyone else, you need to make healthy eating choices. But some of the healthiest foods can make your symptoms worse. Keeping track of your problem foods may be helpful. Ask your healthcare provider any questions you have about healthy eating.

There's no rule for which foods can be a problem. How you feel after eating them is the best guide. You may need to stay away from high-fiber foods and foods that are hard to digest. These can include fresh fruits and vegetables. High-fat foods, such as whole milk dairy products and red meat, can also make symptoms worse in a flare-up. Write down what you eat and how it affects you. If one kind of food often gives you trouble, stay away from it. Also note the foods that work well for you. Your healthcare provider may have you see a registered dietitian to come up with the best food choices for you. A registered dietitian can help make sure that you eat foods that are safe for you while getting correct nourishment.

People will have different reactions to foods. But these choices are often safe to eat during a flare-up:

- Tuna packed in water
- Skinless chicken
- White rice
- Mashed potatoes
- Plain pasta
- Instant oatmeal
- Melba toast
- Applesauce
- Flavored gelatin
- Vanilla pudding
- Custard
- Baked potatoes (don't eat the skin)
- Canned peaches or pears

Special issues

In rare cases, the small intestine can't absorb nutrients. Total parenteral nutrition (TPN) is a treatment that provides nourishment through an IV (intravenous) tube. This lets you get nutrition without eating, giving your digestive tract time to rest. TPN also may be used to help get ready for surgery, if needed. TPN can be done in the hospital. Or it can be done at home with the help of a home health nurse.

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