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Crohn's Disease

Also called: Regional enteritis, Regional ileitis

What is Crohn's disease?

Crohn's disease is a chronic (long-lasting) disease that causes inflammation in your digestive tract. It can affect any part of your digestive tract, which runs from your mouth to your anus. But it usually affects your small intestine and the beginning of your large intestine.

Crohn's disease is an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Ulcerative colitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ulcerativecolitis.html>] and microscopic colitis are other common types of IBD.

What causes Crohn's disease?

The cause of Crohn's disease is unknown. Researchers think that an autoimmune reaction may be one cause. An autoimmune reaction happens when your immune system [<https://medlineplus.gov/immunesystemanddisorders.html>] attacks healthy cells in your body. Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/crohns-disease/>] may also play a role, since Crohn's disease can run in families.

Stress and eating certain foods don't cause the disease, but they can make your symptoms worse.

Who is more likely to develop Crohn's disease?

There are certain factors that may raise your risk of Crohn's disease:

- **Family history** of the disease. Having a parent, child, or sibling with the disease puts you at higher risk.
- **Smoking** [<https://medlineplus.gov/smoking.html>] . This may double your risk of developing Crohn's disease.
- **Certain medicines**, such as antibiotics [<https://medlineplus.gov/antibiotics.html>] , birth-control pills [<https://medlineplus.gov/birthcontrol.html>] , and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs [<https://medlineplus.gov/painrelievers.html>] (NSAIDs) such as aspirin or ibuprofen. These may slightly increase your chance of developing Crohn's.
- **A high-fat diet.** This may also slightly increase your risk of Crohn's.

What are the symptoms of Crohn's disease?

The symptoms of Crohn's disease can vary, depending where and how severe your inflammation is. The most common symptoms include:

- **Diarrhea** [<https://medlineplus.gov/diarrhea.html>]
- **Cramping and pain** [<https://medlineplus.gov/abdominalpain.html>] in your abdomen
- **Weight loss**

Some other possible symptoms are:

- **Anemia** [<https://medlineplus.gov/anemia.html>] , a condition in which you have fewer red blood cells than normal
- **Eye redness or pain**

- Fatigue [<https://medlineplus.gov/fatigue.html>]
- Fever [<https://medlineplus.gov/fever.html>]
- Joint pain or soreness
- Nausea [<https://medlineplus.gov/nauseaandvomiting.html>] or loss of appetite
- Skin changes that involve red, tender bumps under the skin

Stress and eating certain foods such as carbonated (fizzy) drinks and high-fiber foods may make some people's symptoms worse.

What other problems can Crohn's disease cause?

Crohn's disease can cause other problems, including:

- Intestinal obstruction [<https://medlineplus.gov/intestinalobstruction.html>] , a blockage in the intestine
- Fistulas [<https://medlineplus.gov/fistulas.html>] , abnormal connections between two parts inside of the body
- Abscesses [<https://medlineplus.gov/abscess.html>] , pus-filled pockets of infection
- Anal fissures, small tears in your anus that may cause itching, pain, or bleeding
- Ulcers, open sores in your mouth, intestines, anus, or perineum
- Malnutrition [<https://medlineplus.gov/malnutrition.html>] , when your body does not get the right amount of vitamins [<https://medlineplus.gov/vitamins.html>] , minerals [<https://medlineplus.gov/minerals.html>] , and nutrients it needs
- Inflammation in other areas of your body, such as your joints, eyes, and skin

How is Crohn's disease diagnosed?

Your health care provider may use many tools to make a diagnosis:

- A medical history, which includes asking about your symptoms
- A family history
- A physical exam, including:
 - Checking for bloating in your abdomen.
 - Listening to sounds within your abdomen using a stethoscope.
 - Tapping on your abdomen to check for tenderness and pain and to see if your liver or spleen is abnormal or enlarged.
- Various tests, including:
 - Blood and stool tests.
 - A colonoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/colonoscopy.html>] .
 - An upper GI endoscopy, a procedure in which your provider uses a scope to look inside your mouth, esophagus, stomach, and small intestine.
 - Diagnostic imaging [<https://medlineplus.gov/diagnosticimaging.html>] tests, such as a CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ctscans.html>] or an upper GI series. An upper GI series uses a special liquid called barium and x-rays [<https://medlineplus.gov/xrays.html>] . Drinking the barium will make your upper GI tract more visible on an x-ray.

What are the treatments for Crohn's disease?

There is no cure for Crohn's disease, but treatments can decrease inflammation in your intestines, relieve symptoms, and prevent complications. Treatments include medicines, bowel rest, and surgery. No single treatment works for everyone. You and your provider can work together to figure out which treatment is best for you:

- **Medicines** for Crohn's include various medicines that decrease the inflammation. Many of these medicines do this by reducing the activity of your immune system. Certain medicines can also help with symptoms or complications, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs [<https://medlineplus.gov/painrelievers.html>] and anti-diarrheal medicines. If your Crohn's causes an infection, you may need antibiotics.
- **Bowel rest** involves drinking only certain liquids or not eating or drinking anything. This allows your intestines to rest. You may need to do this if your Crohn's disease symptoms are severe. You get your nutrients through drinking a liquid, a feeding tube, or an intravenous (IV) tube. You may need to do bowel rest in the hospital, or you may be able to do it at home. It will last for a few days or up to several weeks.

- **Surgery** can treat complications and reduce symptoms when other treatments are not helping enough. The surgery will involve removing a damaged part of your digestive tract to treat:
 - Fistulas
 - Bleeding [<https://medlineplus.gov/gastrointestinalbleeding.html>] that is life threatening
 - Intestinal obstructions
 - Side effects from medicines when they threaten your health
 - Symptoms when medicines do not improve your condition

Changing your diet can help reduce symptoms. Your provider may recommend that you make changes to your diet, such as:

- Avoiding carbonated drinks
- Avoiding popcorn, vegetable skins, nuts, and other high-fiber foods
- Drinking more liquids
- Eating smaller meals more often
- Keeping a food diary to help identify foods that cause problems

In some cases, your provider may ask you to go on a special diet, such as a diet that is:

- High calorie
- Lactose free
- Low fat
- Low fiber
- Low salt

If you are not absorbing enough nutrients, you may need to take nutritional supplements and vitamins.

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Start Here

- Crohn's Disease [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/crohns-disease>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-digestivas/enfermedad-crohn>]
- What Is Crohn's Disease? [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/patientsandcaregivers/what-is-crohns-disease>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America)

Symptoms

- Gastrointestinal (GI) Bleeding [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/gastrointestinal-bleeding>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-digestivas/sangrado-gastrointestinal>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Bacteria Culture Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/bacteria-culture-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-cultivo-de-bacterias/>]
- C-Reactive Protein (CRP) Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/c-reactive-protein-crp-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-proteina-c-reactiva-pcr/>]
- Calprotectin Stool Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/calprotectin-stool-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-calprotectina-fecal/>]
- Colonoscopy: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/colonoscopy.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/colonoscopy.html>]
- Lower GI Series (Barium Enema) [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diagnostic-tests/lower-gi-series>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/pruebas-diagnosticas/transito-gastrointestinal-inferior>]

Upper GI Series [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diagnostic-tests/upper-gi-series>]

 (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/pruebas-diagnosticas/transito-esofagogastrroduodenal>]

- White Blood Cell (WBC) in Stool [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/white-blood-cell-wbc-in-stool/>]

 (National Library of Medicine)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/globulos-blancos-en-las-heces/>]

- Xylose Testing [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/xylose-testing/>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-de-xilosa/>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Colostomy - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100011_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)

Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100011_1.htm]

- Ostomy Surgery of the Bowel [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/ostomy-surgery-bowel>]

 (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

- Surgery for Crohn's Disease [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/patientsandcaregivers/what-is-crohns-disease/treatment/surgery>]  (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America)

- Treatment for Crohn's Disease [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/crohns-disease/treatment>]

 (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-digestivas/enfermedad-crohn/tratamiento>]

- Understanding IBD Medications and Side Effects [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/understanding-ibd-medications-brochure-final-online2.pdf>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America) - PDF

- What is Complementary Medicine? [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/patientandcaregivers/ibd/complementary-medicine>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America)

Living With

- Bone Loss [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/pdfs/boneloss.pdf>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America) - PDF

- Eye Complications [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/pdfs/eyes.pdf>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America) - PDF

- General Health Maintenance [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/patientsandcaregivers/personal-health-beyond-ibd/general-health-maintenance>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America)

- IBD and Fatigue [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/patientsandcaregivers/pain-and-fatigue/fatigue-causes>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America)

- IBD General Nutrition Information [<https://gikids.org/resource/ibd-general-nutrition-information/>] (North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition)

- Intestinal Complications [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/pdfs/intestinalcomps.pdf>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America) - PDF

- Kidney Disorders [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/pdfs/kidney.pdf>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America) - PDF

- Liver Complications [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/pdfs/liver-disease.pdf>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America) - PDF

- Managing Flares and IBD Symptoms [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/managing-flares-brochure-final-online.pdf>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America) - PDF

- Mental and Emotional Well-being [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/patientsandcaregivers/mental-health>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America)

- Risk of Colorectal Cancer in Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis Patients [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/patientsandcaregivers/what-is-ibd/colorectal-cancer>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America)

- Sex, Intimacy, and IBD [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/pdfs/ibdsexuality.pdf>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America) -  PDF
- Skin Complications [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/pdfs/skin.pdf>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America) -  PDF

Related Issues

- Gut Troubles: Pain, Gassiness, Bloating, and More [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2020/02/gut-troubles>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- Overview of Enteropathic Arthritis / Arthritis Associated with Inflammatory Bowel Disease [<https://spondylitis.org/about-spondylitis/overview-of-spondyloarthritis/enteropathic-arthritis/>] (Spondylitis Association of America)
- Proctitis [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/proctitis>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
- Short Bowel Syndrome [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/short-bowel-syndrome>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
- Traveling with IBD [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/what-is-ibd/traveling-with-ibd>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America)

Genetics

- Crohn disease: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/crohns-disease>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Test Your Knowledge

- Crohn Disease Treatment Quiz [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/quiz/000249_49.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/quiz/000249_106.htm]

Statistics and Research

- Current Research Initiatives [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/research/current-research-initiatives>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America)
- Inflammation [<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/conditions/inflammation>]  (National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences)
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Facts and Stats [<https://www.cdc.gov/inflammatory-bowel-disease/php/facts-stats/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Crohn Disease [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Crohn+Disease%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Inflammatory Bowel Diseases [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Inflammatory+Bowel+Diseases%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Impact of mirikizumab treatment on fatigue in patients with moderately to... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40491246>]
- Article: Deucravacitinib in patients with inflammatory bowel disease: 12-week efficacy and safety... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40355364>]
- Article: Spanish Working Group in Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis (GETECCU) position... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40250758>]

Crohn's Disease -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Crohn+Disease%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons [<https://fascrs.org/>]
- Find a Gastroenterologist (GI Doctor) [<https://gi.org/patients/find-a-gastroenterologist/>] (American College of Gastroenterology)
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>] 

Children

- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (For Children) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/ibd.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/ibd.html>]
- Nutrition Therapy and Crohn's Disease (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/nutrition-crohns.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/nutrition-crohns.html>]

Teenagers

- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (For Teens) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/ibd.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/ibd.html>]
- Mental and Emotional Well-Being [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/youth-parent-resources/teens>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America)

Women

- Inflammatory Bowel Disease [<https://womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/inflammatory-bowel-disease>] (Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/inflammatory-bowel-disease>]
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease and Pregnancy [<https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/inflammatory-bowel-disease-pregnancy/>] (Organization of Teratology Information Specialists)
Also in Spanish [<https://mothertobaby.org/es/hojas-informativas/enfermedades-inflamatorias-del-intestino/>]

Adults

- Managing IBD as a Young Adult [<https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Young%20Adults%20IBD%20-%202021-Final.pdf>] (Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America) - PDF

Patient Handouts

- Colonoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003886.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003886.htm>]
- Crohn disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000249.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000249.htm>]
- Crohn disease - children - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000937.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000937.htm>]
- Crohn disease - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000194.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000194.htm>]
- Low-fiber diet [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000200.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000200.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Albumin blood (serum) test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003480.htm>]

Barium enema [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003817.htm>]

Black or tarry stools [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003130.htm>]

Colonoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003886.htm>]

Colostomy - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100011_1.htm]

Crohn disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000249.htm>]

Crohn disease - children - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000937.htm>]

Crohn disease - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000194.htm>]

D-xylose absorption [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003606.htm>]

Enteroclysis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003818.htm>]

ESR [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003638.htm>]

Fecal fat [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003588.htm>]

Inflammatory bowel disease - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100171_1.htm]

Low-fiber diet [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000200.htm>]

Phosphorus blood test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003478.htm>]

Total colectomy or proctocolectomy - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000153.htm>]

Total proctocolectomy with ileostomy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007381.htm>]

Toxic megacolon [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000248.htm>]

Virtual colonoscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007253.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Colonic Diseases [<https://medlineplus.gov/colonicdiseases.html>]

Ulcerative Colitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ulcerativecolitis.html>]

The primary NIH organization for research on *Crohn's Disease* is the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>]

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