



INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE (IBD) What You Need to Know

PATIENT NAME: _____

DATE: _____

What You Need to Know

What is it?

Inflammatory bowel diseases, which include Crohn's disease (CD) and ulcerative colitis (UC), are inflammatory conditions of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. CD is usually located in many parts of the GI tract, while UC is usually present in the colon. IBD is often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed.

What are the symptoms?

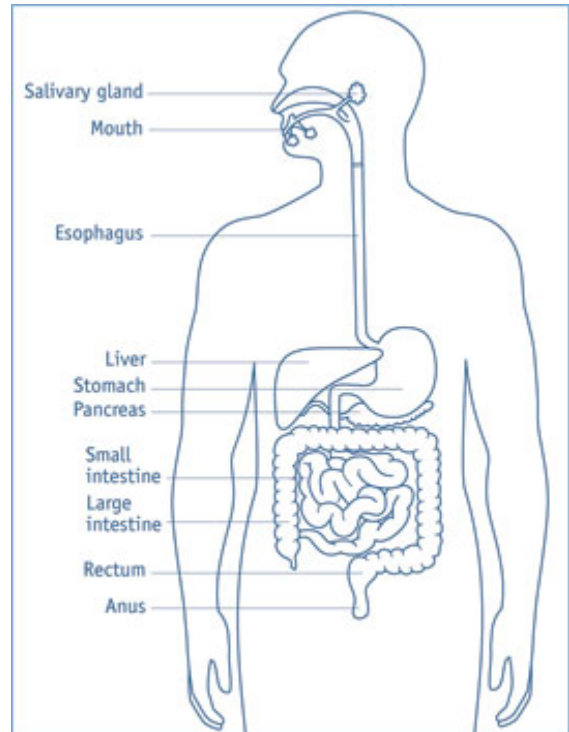
People who struggle with IBD suffer from symptoms such as blood and mucous in their stools, constipation, diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, and lack of appetite leading to weight loss.

Who has IBD?

As many as 4 million people worldwide suffer from some form of IBD. Men and women are affected by IBD almost equally. The disease is more common in whites than non-whites and it is often found in Jewish families. Inflammatory bowel diseases are incurable and chronic, however, most patients can continue to lead normal and productive lives with proper treatment. In between exacerbations, patients usually feel well and are relatively symptom free.

What is the cause and what can I do to help it?

The cause of IBD is unknown, although there are some theories, which may play a role in the development or exacerbation of IBD, including: genetics, our immune system, the environment, diet, and stress.



- ✓ **Genetics** IBD tends to run in families, but at this time there is no way to predict if certain family members will develop the disease.
- ✓ **Immune System** Some researchers believe that the body's immune system may inappropriately respond to normal proteins in the body, creating inflammation in order to try and fight "foreign" substances.
- ✓ **Environment** Although there is no clear-cut evidence, our environment may have an effect on the development and symptoms of IBD, such as smoking and living in an urban area.
- ✓ **Diet** What you eat does not cause IBD, but can cause symptoms when the disease is active. Depending on your symptoms, your doctor may suggest that you cut down on the amount of fiber or dairy products in your diet. Symptoms of IBD can rob the body of essential fluids and nutrients, so eating a well-balanced diet is best.
- ✓ **Stress** Stress has been shown to aggravate the symptoms of IBD, so do your best to manage the stress in your life both at work and at home. If you cannot manage stress on your own, seek the advice of your physician or join a support group devoted to IBD.
- ✓ **General Well-being** The best thing you can do is take good care of yourself. Get plenty of rest, make time for exercise, and have fun!