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INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE (IBD) MAKING THE MOST OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR GASTROENTEROLOGIST

Why Is Seeing a Gastroenterologist Important?

A gastroenterologist:

- Is the most qualified doctor to diagnose and treat inflammatory bowel disease, or IBD
- Can tell if you have Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, the two most common forms of IBD
- Can work with you and your family to develop a treatment plan that is right for you

A gastroenterologist is a doctor who specializes in treating diseases of the gastrointestinal (digestive) tract and the liver.

About IBD

- IBD is the name given to a group of inflammatory diseases of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract¹
- IBD is different than irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)¹
 - IBS does not cause inflammation in the GI tract
 - IBS affects muscle contractions in the GI tract
- In IBD, your immune system makes a mistake and attacks your GI tract. Immune cells travel out of your blood to the intestines and produce inflammation²
- The two major types of IBD are Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis¹
- Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis affect different parts of the GI tract²
 - Crohn's disease can affect any part of your GI tract from the mouth or oral cavity to the anus
 - Ulcerative colitis only affects the colon and rectum (the large intestine)

Symptoms of IBD

- The symptoms of Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis are similar²
- The symptoms of ulcerative colitis are usually from inflammation of the lower portion of the colon and the rectum (last 6 inches of the intestine)³
- Symptoms of Crohn’s disease can vary depending on where the inflammation is in the intestine²
- When Crohn’s disease is in the colon (large intestine),⁴ symptoms may be similar to symptoms of ulcerative colitis⁵

Common Symptoms of IBD^{6,7}

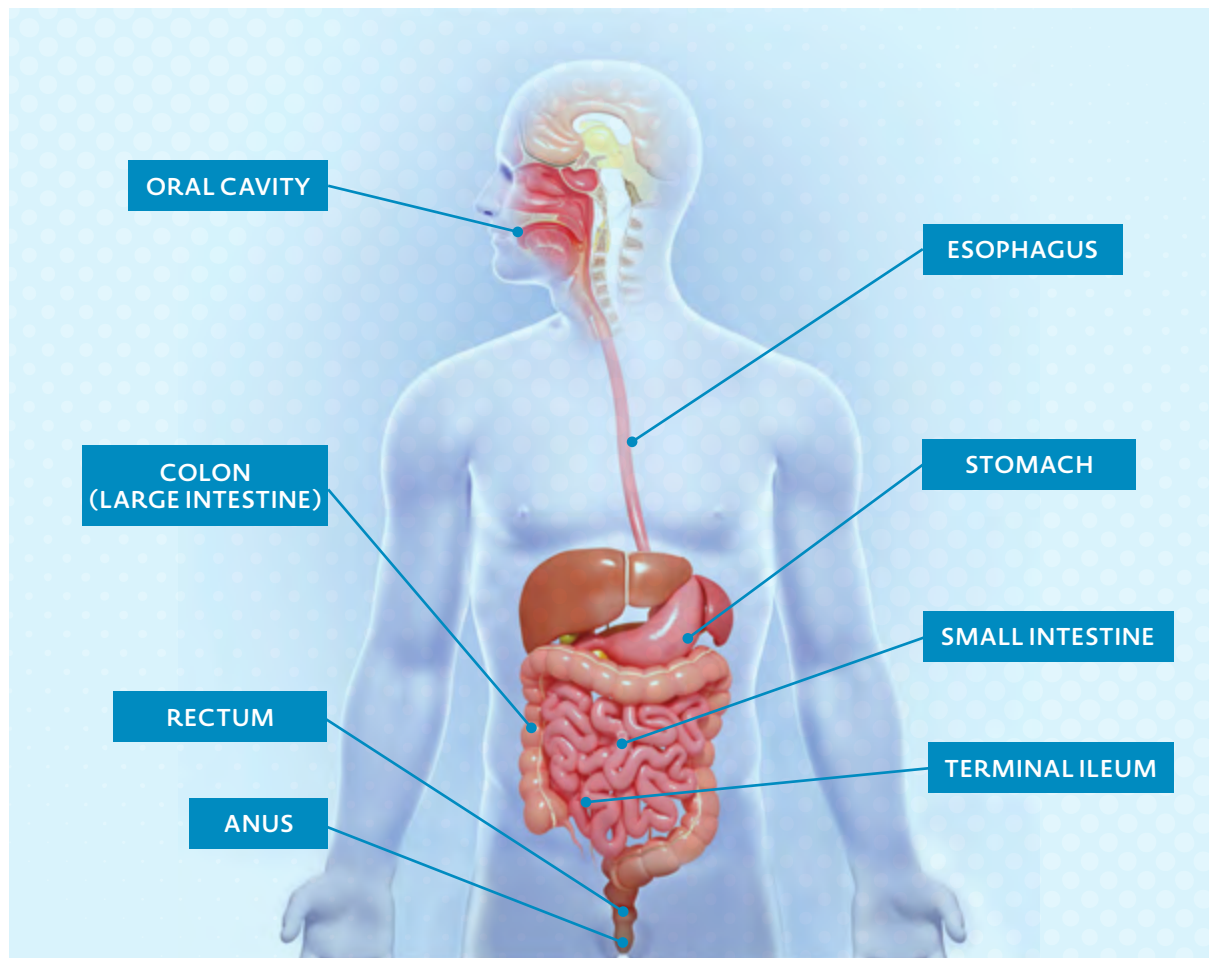
CROHN’S DISEASE	ULCERATIVE COLITIS
Diarrhea	Urgency or frequency of bowel movement, diarrhea
Abdominal pain	Rectal bleeding
Weight loss	Mucus discharge from rectum
	Tenesmus (continued need to move bowels)
	Cramps/abdominal pain

- IBD can also make you feel tired, lose your appetite, and develop a fever⁶
- IBD is associated with other symptoms outside of your GI tract, including^{5,8}
 - Arthritis
 - Eye problems
 - Skin problems

Inflammation is usually a protective reaction of the tissues in your body in response to injury or infection. Inflammation is associated with pain, redness, and swelling.

The Gastrointestinal (GI) Tract

- Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis affect different parts of the GI tract.²
 - Crohn's disease can affect any part of your GI tract but it usually affects the end of the small intestine and the beginning of the colon
 - Ulcerative colitis only affects the large intestine



You are an important part of the success of your treatment plan. Do your homework and learn as much as you can about IBD.

Questions to Ask at Your First Visit With Your Gastroenterology Care Team

Your gastroenterology care team may include a gastroenterologist, a gastroenterology nurse practitioner or physician assistant, and a gastroenterology nurse.

- What type of IBD do I have?
- Where is my disease located?
- How will I know if I have a flare in my symptoms?
- What symptoms should prompt me to call your office or go to the hospital?
- Which treatment options may be right for me?
- What are the benefits and side effects of these treatments?
- How long will it take before I see an improvement in my symptoms?
- What should I do to make sure I get the most from my medication?
- What should I do if I miss a dose of my medication?
- What else can I do to help manage my IBD?
- How do I maintain good nutrition?
- How does my diet affect IBD?
- Does stress affect IBD?
- How do I explain my disease to my family and friends at work/school?
- What Web sites do you recommend?

Source: Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America. IBD Quick Guide.
<http://www.ibdetermined.org/Common/Documents/Tips%20and%20Resource.pdf>.

How Can I Make the Most of Every Office Visit With My Gastroenterology Care Team?

At every visit, it is important to be honest and open about how you are feeling and how IBD affects your daily life. Here are a few helpful hints:

Prepare for each visit

- Write down any questions or symptoms you want to discuss
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Repeat important information

- When your provider tells you something important, repeat the information in your own words. By doing this you will be sure that you understand what the provider is saying. You or a family member should write down important information so that you do not forget
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Be open

- Describe the way that IBD affects your life. Be honest. Tell the provider if you have not been following your treatment plan. Do not be afraid to ask questions
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Keep a journal or log

- Write down the ways that IBD affects you. Write down any symptoms you feel and any side effects from your medications. Include information about when symptoms started and how long they lasted. Also, use your journal to write down questions when you think of them
 - Phone apps can help you track your symptoms, treatments, and well-being
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Bring a family member or friend with you

- A person who comes with you can help you stay focused during the visit and write down or remember important information
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Keep a list of medications

- Your medication list should include all the medications that you are taking and the dosages. It should also include any supplements or over-the-counter medications that you take. Always tell your provider if your medications have changed since your last visit
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Talk to your doctor

- Talk about any concerns or issues that you have so that your gastroenterologist can come up with a treatment plan that is best for you
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Follow up

- If you forget to ask a question during your visit or if something is unclear after you leave the office, call the office and leave a message

Helping Your Gastroenterology Care Team Know More About You and Your IBD

Answer the questions below and bring them with you to your gastroenterologist appointment. The answers will help your gastroenterology care team help you.

Question: About how many soft or loose bowel movements do you have each day?

Answer: _____

Question: How would you rate abdominal pain you have had in the past month?

Answer:

- a. No pain
- b. Light pain
- c. Moderate pain
- d. Severe pain

Question: Has your weight changed? If yes, by how many pounds?

Answer: _____ pounds

Question: How frustrated are you by your IBD symptoms?

Answer:

- a. Not at all
- b. Somewhat frustrated
- c. Extremely frustrated

Question: Have your symptoms gotten worse since your last visit?

Answer:

- a. Yes
- b. No

Planning for the Future

- Tell your gastroenterology care team if you will be traveling. Find out what precautions you need to consider
- Ask your gastroenterologist if you still need to be on medication
- Ask if you need any vaccinations
- Ask about your next colonoscopy and other screening tests
- Find out if there are any educational conferences you should know about

Resources

Find out more about IBD by visiting these Web sites or calling for information:

Crohn's & Colitis Advocate Program

Web site: <https://www.crohnsandcolitisinfo.com/Crohns/Advocate-Program>

Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America

Web site: <http://www.ccfa.org/>

Phone: 1-888-MY-GUT-PAIN (1-888-694-8872)

You and IBD

Web site: <http://www.youandibd.com/en/home.aspx>

References: 1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). <http://www.cdc.gov/ibd/>. Accessed November 9, 2015. 2. Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America. What is Crohn's disease? <http://www.ccfa.org/what-are-crohns-and-colitis/what-is-crohns-disease/>. Accessed November 9, 2015. 3. Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America. The facts about inflammatory bowel diseases. November 2014. <http://www.ccfa.org/assets/pdfs/updatedibdfactbook.pdf>. Accessed August 19, 2015. 4. MayoClinic.org. Diseases and conditions. Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/inflammatory-bowel-disease/basics/definition/con-20034908>. Accessed November 17, 2015. 5. Lichtenstein GR, Hanauer SB, Sandborn WJ, and Practice Parameters Committee of American College of Gastroenterology. Management of Crohn's disease in adults. *Am J Gastroenterol*. 2009;104(2):465-483. 6. Stenson WF. Inflammatory bowel disease. In: Goldman L, Ausiello D, eds. *Cecil Medicine*. 23rd ed. Philadelphia, PA: Saunders Elsevier; 2008:1042-1050. 7. Friedman S, Blumberg R.S. Inflammatory bowel disease. In: Fauci AS, Kasper DL, Longo DL, et al, eds. *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*. 17th ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill; 2008:1886-1899. 8. Kornbluth A, Sachar DB, and Practice Parameters Committee of American College of Gastroenterology. Ulcerative colitis practice guidelines in adults: American College of Gastroenterology, Practice Parameters Committee. *Am J Gastroenterol*. 2010;105:501-523.