



Crohn's disease

The lower section of your small intestine is called the ileum. It's connected to your colon. When the ileum (and sometimes the colon) becomes chronically inflamed, the condition is called Crohn's disease.



EARLY SYMPTOMS

- Cramps and pain on the lower right side of the abdomen, usually after a meal
- Diarrhea
- Slight fever
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Sores in the anal area. At times, rectal bleeding.
- Joint pain
- Fatigue

Most cases of Crohn's disease are diagnosed in persons younger than 30, but can occur in persons older, too.

Crohn's disease tends to run in families. Doctors also suspect environmental factors may be partially to blame.

Crohn's disease is quite unpredictable: It comes and goes, triggering attacks off and on for months or years. However, treatment is fairly successful and consists of medications to decrease the inflammation, complications, and possibly antibiotics, should an infection occur. Rest, especially during severe attacks, use of a heating pad to relieve abdominal cramps, and drinking as many liquids as possible to prevent dehydration. Sometimes, during a severe attack, nutrients are given as a special liquid, a feeding tube, or an intravenous tube. Surgery is sometimes needed to treat complications.

About 70 percent of those with Crohn's disease undergo surgery. But it's usually not a cure: Crohn's tends to recur in another portion of the intestine.

Certain foods like milk, gluten (in wheat and other grains), carbonated drinks, some high-fiber foods, and eating smaller meals more often, may help reduce symptoms. Avoid drinking alcohol, which also irritates your system. As for other dietary measures, keeping a food diary is helpful to identify foods that cause problems.

Note: Crohn's disease can mimic other intestinal diseases and can only be diagnosed by a physician. If you experience any of the symptoms described, get medical attention.

