

What Is Crohn's Disease?

Crohn's disease is a chronic (lasting a long time) inflammatory condition that involves the intestinal tract. Crohn's disease can affect any part of the digestive tract starting in the mouth and ending in the anus. Crohn's disease most commonly affects the last part of the small intestine (ileum) and/or the large intestine (colon and rectum).

Crohn's disease is a chronic illness that may come back at different times through one's life. Some people go a long time without symptoms (remission). There is no way to predict when the symptoms will stop or when they will return.

How do I know if I have Crohn's Disease?

- Cramping - stomach pain.
 - Diarrhea.
 - Fever.
 - Weight loss.
 - Stomach Bloating.
 - Anal pain or drainage.
 - Skin lesions (sores, cuts)
 - Rectal abscess (wound or infection).
 - Fissure (small tear in the skin that lines the opening of the anus).
 - Joint pain (arthritis).
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What causes Crohn's Disease?

There is no exact cause of Crohn's disease but it can be related to family history (genetics).

How can I fix it?

There is no "cure" for Crohn's disease; medicines can be given to treat the disease and/or help with the symptoms. These medicines include:

- Aspirin based medications (*Asacol* Mesalamine, Azulfidine, Pentasa)
- Corticosteroids (Prednisone and Methylprednisolone).
- Immunosuppressive (6-mercaptopurine azathioprine, Infliximab *Remicade*, Humira).
- Antibiotics (Metronidazole *Flagyl*, Ciprofloxacin).

When is surgery needed?

In more difficult cases of Crohn's disease, surgery may be suggested.

Surgery is required in 3 out of 4 patients with Crohn's disease. Surgery does not cure Crohn's disease; most patients may never need more than one surgery over a lifetime. Surgery usually offers relief for a long time and may allow patients to decrease medication use. A **limited resection of intestine** (diseased part of the bowel is removed) is the most common procedure done. Patients may need surgery for other anorectal conditions such as an abscess or fistula.

How can I learn more?

You can also find information through the American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons (ASCRS) at <http://www.fascrs.org/patients/conditions/>

Do you have any questions or comments for your doctor?
