



## SPEAKING OUT ABOUT INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a group of diseases marked by inflammation in the intestines.

The two primary types of IBD are Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, disorders characterized by an atypical response by the immune system. As many as 1.4 million Americans suffer from IBD, according to the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America. Although a diagnosis of IBD can be overwhelming, it is important to note that with proper treatment, individuals who have Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis can maintain full and active lives.

### CROHN'S DISEASE

Crohn's disease is a chronic illness in which the digestive tract, also called the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, becomes inflamed, causing symptoms that might include frequent diarrhea, cramping, abdominal pain, fever, and rectal bleeding. Any part of the GI tract can become inflamed; however, in most cases, Crohn's disease affects the small intestine or colon, or both. Symptoms may change over time and generally vary according to which part of the GI tract is affected.

### ULCERATIVE COLITIS

While Crohn's disease can afflict any part of the digestive tract, ulcerative colitis affects the colon only. A chronic disorder, ulcerative colitis causes inflammation and ulceration of the innermost lining of the colon, called the colon mucosa. The inflammation causes symptoms including frequent diarrhea that may contain blood, cramping,

abdominal pain, and in some cases, fever and nausea. Ulcerative colitis can take various forms, and symptoms and complications differ from case to case.

### TREATMENT

Currently, there is no cure for Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis. A variety of medications can be used in order to repress the body's inflammatory response so that the intestinal tissue or colon can heal and the symptoms can be relieved. In some cases, medication fails to control the symptoms or complications arise, so surgery becomes necessary. The Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America reports that two-thirds to three-quarters of patients with Crohn's disease will require surgery at some point during their lives, and surgery may be considered for one-quarter to one-third of ulcerative colitis patients.

### DON'T SUFFER SILENTLY

Many people are not comfortable talking about IBD because the symptoms involve bodily functions that are not often discussed. If you suspect that you suffer from IBD, there is no reason to be embarrassed or uncomfortable. Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are common, manageable conditions, and advances in treatment are occurring daily. If you experience symptoms associated with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, it is vital that you talk to a physician about your symptoms. Ignoring symptoms is likely to cause the condition to escalate unnecessarily. For assistance, contact the **Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America's** Information Resource Center at **888.MY.GUT.PAIN** or **www.cffa.org**.

If you experience symptoms of inflammatory bowel disease, contact a physician for diagnosis and treatment options.

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