

CROHN'S DISEASE

SYMPTOMS OR BEHAVIORS

- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Rectal bleeding
- Weight loss
- Anemia
- Fatigue
- Pain in joints
- Skin irritations

ABOUT THE DISORDER

Crohn's disease is a chronic, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), the general name of diseases that causes inflammation in the intestines. Crohn's disease usually occurs in the lower part of the small intestine or beginning of the large intestine, but can affect any part of the digestive tract. The inflammation which develops extends deep into the lining of the affected organ and can cause pain and make the intestines empty frequently, resulting in diarrhea. Crohn's disease can be difficult to diagnose because its symptoms are similar to other intestinal disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome and ulcerative colitis. About 20 percent of people with Crohn's disease have a blood relative with some form of IBD, most often a brother/sister or sometimes a parent or child. Men and women are equally affected and IBD most commonly begins during early childhood and adolescence, but it can also begin during adolescence and later in life. Researchers do not know what causes Crohn's disease, but many theories exist. People with Crohn's disease tend to have abnormalities of the immune system, but doctors do not know whether these abnormalities can cause or result in the disease.

The most common symptoms of Crohn's disease are abdominal pain and persistent diarrhea. In addition, a small percentage of patients with IBD suffer from certain types of arthritis, skin conditions, inflammation of the eye, liver dysfunction, and bone loss. Individuals with Crohn's Disease may have a poor appetite with weight loss and fatigue. Rectal bleeding may be serious and persistent, leading to anemia. Onset of IBD in childhood or adolescence may reduce the height of peak bone mass, resulting in an increased likelihood of osteoporosis. A thorough physical examination and series of tests are required to confirm a diagnosis of Crohn's disease. There are numerous complications involved with Crohn's disease; the most common complication is blockage of the intestine which occurs because the disease tends to thicken the intestinal wall with swelling and scar tissue, narrowing the passage. Deficiencies of proteins, calories, and vitamins have also been noted which may be caused by inadequate dietary intake, intestinal loss of protein, or poor absorption (malabsorption). Gallstones and kidney stones can be common in patients with Crohn's disease.

Currently, there is no cure for Crohn's disease and treatment depends on the location and severity of the disease, complications, and response to previous treatments. The goal of treatment is to control inflammation, correct nutritional deficiencies, and relieve symptoms. Treatment may include drugs, nutritional supplements, surgery, or a combination of these options. Some patients have long periods of remission, sometimes years, when they are free of symptoms.

Patients diagnosed with Crohn's disease will require life-long medical monitoring.



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EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- Students may be absent from school more frequently due to on-going medical cares.
- Students may have loss of focus due to fatigue, pain, or emotional distress.
- Students may need extended time to complete schoolwork.
- Students may require a personalized school schedule that accommodates their medical needs (i.e. arriving at school later, leaving early, time permitted to go to use the bathroom, etc.)
- Student may require activity modifications if experiencing a flare-up or recovering from a flare-up.
- Students may need to abruptly leave due to frequent toileting needs.
- Students may experience periods of emotional distress.
- Student may require alternative school hours, depending on fatigue, physical pain or emotional distress.
- Though students can usually eat a normal diet, they may need to temporarily modify their diet during disease flare-ups (i.e. by avoiding high fiber or spicy foods.)

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS

- Students may need unrestricted bathroom privileges and extra time for toileting needs (private bathroom may be an option).
- During flare-ups, extra time for work completion.
- During flare-ups, modified physical activities may be necessary.
- Students may benefit from assistance from a counselor or mental health specialist to help with emotional issues that accompany students with chronic health disabilities.
- Students may benefit from the services of a school nurse (or other health professional) to explain the student's condition and develop an individual health plan.
- Student may need to take medications during the school day to help control diarrhea, pain, and other symptoms.
- During flare-ups, student may need a modified diet. Work with family, health provider and school nutrition staff to make any necessary dietary accommodations.

RESOURCES

Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of American
386 Park Ave. South, 17 Floor
New York, NY 10016

www.ccfa.org

1-800-932-2423

Minnesota office:

1885 University Ave. W., Ste 355
St Paul, MN 55104

(888) 422-3266

Minnesota@ccfa.org

*Web site, recommended books,
and general info source.*

Pediatric Crohn's & Colitis Ass'n,
PO Box 188

Newton, MA 02468

<http://pcca.hypermart.net>

1-617-489-5854

*Web site with information focusing
on pediatric info*

Books:

"Young People and Chronic Illness:
True Stories, Help and Hope"

Author: Kelly Huegel

Forward: Robert Phillips, Ph.D.

Publisher: Free Spirit Publishing

Price: \$14.95

www.freespirit.com or

1-800-735-7323

"The School Nurse's Source
Book of Individualized
Healthcare Plans. Issues and
Applications in School Nursing
Practice."

Editors: Martha J. Arnold and

Cynthia K. Silkworth

Publisher: Sunrise River Press

Other Books available at

<http://www.wellnessbooks.com>