

# Inflammatory Bowel Disease -IBD

Both IBD (inflammatory bowel disease) and IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) are illnesses that affect the gastrointestinal system, and even though they have some similar symptoms, they are NOT the same. Here, we'll explore more about the differences between those two conditions.

IBD causes damage of the gastrointestinal tract due to a chronic inflammation or ulceration of the intestine. Inflammatory bowel diseases include Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

## Why did I get IBD?

The exact cause of inflammatory bowel diseases is still not fully understood. According to some research, there are several factors involved including genetics, and/or a response to environmental factors.

# Crohn's Disease

## What is Crohn's disease?

Crohn's disease is an inflammatory issue that will affect anywhere along the gastro-intestinal tract (mouth, stomach, intestines, colon, ect.)

## What are the symptoms of Crohn's disease?

Symptoms vary depending on the part of the GI system affected but often include diarrhea, abdominal pain, fatigue, and/or weight loss. Laboratory finding may include deficiencies in vitamin B12, vitamin D, or deficiency in iron.

## Why did I get Crohn's disease?

The exact cause of Crohn's disease is unknown but it is believed to have a hereditary and autoimmune component. Diet and stress can aggravate this condition.

## Diagnosis

A doctor may order blood tests looking for deficiencies in vitamin B12, vitamin D, or deficiency in iron. Stool studies may also be ordered checking for inflammatory markers and to rule out other GI disorders.

---

## Treatment

Because Crohn's disease can affect anywhere along the GI tract and the severity changes significantly from one case to the next treatment options will vary but often include glucocorticoids and/or immunosuppressors. Taking vitamins and changes in diet may be suggested all well.

# Ulcerative Colitis

## What is ulcerative colitis?

Ulcerative colitis is a type of IBD that only occurs in the mucosal layer of the colon. It commonly affects the rectum and can continue upwards to other parts of the colon.

## What are the symptoms of ulcerative colitis?

The frequency and severity of diarrhea can help classify the extent of the disease in a patient.

- Mild - Four or fewer 4 stools per day with or without blood daily
- Moderate - Greater than 4 loose, bloody stools daily
- Severe - Greater than 6 loose, bloody stools daily

Other symptoms can be associated with ulcerative colitis like abdominal pain/cramps, fever, fatigue, weight loss.

## Why did I get ulcerative colitis?

The exact cause of ulcerative colitis is unknown, but researchers believe an overactive intestinal immune system, genetics, and/or environment may be factors to this disease.

## Diagnosis

Experiencing chronic diarrhea for more than 4 weeks can warrant your physician to order an endoscopy and biopsy to determine acute inflammation and chronic changes of the colon. However, your physician will also need to rule out other causes of colitis with additional history and laboratory studies.

---

## Treatment

The main goal for treating ulcerative colitis is to completely heal the mucosal layer of the colon. This includes a medication regime determined by your physician as well as dietary and lifestyle changes.

# IBS - Irritable Bowel Syndrome

## What is IBS?

Irritable bowel syndrome affects the behavior and function of the intestines resulting in uncomfortable symptoms. Patients with IBD can also have IBS, but IBS does not cause IBD.

## What are the symptoms of IBS?

The symptoms and severity of IBS vary from person to person. But they usually include abdominal pain, constipation or diarrhea, abdominal bloating and distension. Symptoms can also be exacerbated by stress.

## Why did I get IBS?

Like crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, the cause of IBS is not fully understood. Potential causes may include sensitivity to changes in the microbiota of the GI tract.

## Diagnosis

To diagnose IBS, your doctor would typically do a physical exam and medical history. He might also order endoscopic exams, or blood tests, to rule out other conditions.

## Treatment

Treatment usually involves dietary and lifestyle changes.

---

# References

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. “Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) | NIDDK.” *National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases*, 16 Jan. 2019, [www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/irritable-bowel-syndrome](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/irritable-bowel-syndrome).

“Crohn’s Disease | NIDDK.” *National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases*, 24 Feb. 2019, [www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/crohns-disease](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/crohns-disease).

Peppercorn, Mark A, and Sunada V Kane. “Clinical Manifestations, Diagnosis, and Prognosis of Ulcerative Colitis in Adults.” UpToDate, Jan 2020, [www-uptodate-com.proxy.rvu.edu/contents/clinical-manifestations-diagnosis-and-prognosis-of-ulcerative-colitis-in-adults?search=ulcerative+colitis](http://www-uptodate-com.proxy.rvu.edu/contents/clinical-manifestations-diagnosis-and-prognosis-of-ulcerative-colitis-in-adults?search=ulcerative+colitis).

“Ulcerative Colitis | NIDDK.” *National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Sept. 2014, [www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/ulcerative-colitis](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/ulcerative-colitis).

[https://www-uptodate-com.proxy.rvu.edu/contents/clinical-manifestations-diagnosis-and-prognosis-of-crohn-disease-in-adults?search=crohns&topicRef=4069&source=see\\_link](https://www-uptodate-com.proxy.rvu.edu/contents/clinical-manifestations-diagnosis-and-prognosis-of-crohn-disease-in-adults?search=crohns&topicRef=4069&source=see_link)

[https://www-uptodate-com.proxy.rvu.edu/contents/overview-of-the-medical-management-of-mild-to-w-risk-crohn-disease-in-adults?search=crohns&source=search\\_result&selectedTitle=1~150&usage\\_type=default&display\\_rank=1](https://www-uptodate-com.proxy.rvu.edu/contents/overview-of-the-medical-management-of-mild-to-w-risk-crohn-disease-in-adults?search=crohns&source=search_result&selectedTitle=1~150&usage_type=default&display_rank=1)