

# Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

## What is IBD?

- IBD is a term used for two separate conditions, UC and Crohn’s disease.
- UC and Crohn’s disease are both life-long inflammatory conditions of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract
- What is the difference between UC and Crohn’s disease?
  - UC occurs in the large intestine (colon and rectum), but can also affect the skin, eyes, and joints.
  - Crohn’s most often affects the end of the small bowel (ileum) and the start of the colon, but may occur anywhere along the GI tract.

## What causes IBD?

- The exact cause is not known. In IBD, your immune system mistakes harmless bacteria in your gut as dangerous and attacks them. This causes inflammation.
- Diet and stress may make IBD worse, but they are not the sole cause.
- You are more likely to get IBD if you have a family member who has it.
- IBD can occur in men and women at any age, but usually starts between the ages of 15 and 35.

## How is IBD diagnosed?

- Your doctor will do a physical exam to look for symptoms. IBD symptoms may include abdominal pain, diarrhea, fever, weight loss, blood or pus in stool, fatigue, and reduced appetite.
- Imaging, blood, and stool tests may be done to rule out other conditions.

## Fast facts

- IBD is a term used to describe two different diseases, ulcerative colitis (UC) and Crohn’s disease.
- IBD is most common in people who have other family members with the disease.
- Diet and stress may make IBD symptoms worse, but they are likely not the cause of the disease.

## How is IBD treated?

- The goal is to improve symptoms and slow the disease.  
No single treatment works for all people.
- Treatment depends on symptom severity, but may include antibiotics, aminosalicylates, steroids, immune modifiers, or biologic therapies.
- Certain foods and drinks may make IBD symptoms worse. Talk to your doctor and dietitian about creating a diet for you to make sure you are getting enough calories and nutrients.

## Points to remember

- IBD is a life-long disease that may be constant or may have occasional flares.
- IBD can increase your risk for colon cancer and malnutrition.  
The risk is higher if IBD isn't treated.

## For additional information

- Crohn's & Colitis Foundation – **[www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org](http://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org)**
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases – **[www.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.niddk.nih.gov)**