

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

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What is IBD?

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a disease of long-term inflammation in your digestive tract and can cause problems like stomach pain, diarrhea, bleeding, tiredness and weight loss. Types of IBD include ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.

Ulcerative colitis affects the lining of your colon and rectum.

- Causes inflammation and sores (ulcers) throughout the inner lining

Crohn's disease can affect the entire digestive tract, from the mouth to the anus.

- Causes patches of inflammation in the lining of the entire digestive system, leading to a "cobblestone" appearance and thickened wall

What causes IBD?

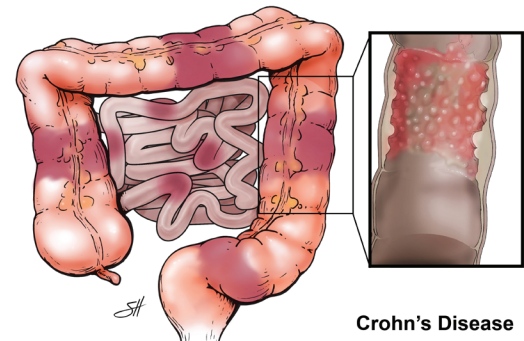
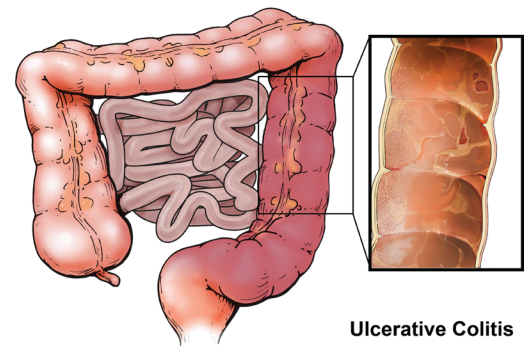
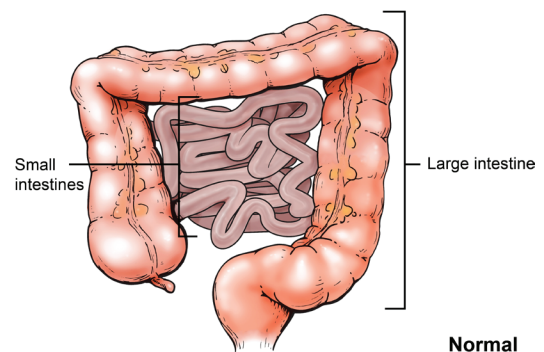
No one is absolutely sure why IBD happens, but three things seem to matter:

- *Genetics*: If your family has IBD, you might get it too.
- *Immune system*: The body's immune system thinks food is an enemy and attacks it. In the process, it starts harming your body.
- *Environmental triggers*: Certain things like smoking, stress, certain medicines and depression might trigger IBD, especially if it runs in your family.

How is IBD diagnosed?

Doctors use different tests to figure out if you have IBD:

- *Upper endoscopy (EGD)*: Looks at the gut from the mouth to the start of the small intestine
- *Colonoscopy*: Looks at the colon and the end of the small intestine
- *Flexible sigmoidoscopy*: Looks at the rectum and anus
- *Imaging scans*: CT scans or MRIs to see signs of inflammation in the gut
- *Capsule endoscopy*: A small camera you swallow that takes pictures as it moves through your digestive tract



Complications of IBD

Having IBD may lead to the following issues:

- **Cancer:** The risk of developing colon or rectal cancer is high, so regular check-ups are important.
- **Bowel obstruction:** Parts of the bowel can thicken and narrow causing a blockage.
- **Malnutrition:** It might be hard to eat or absorb nutrients needing supplementation.
- **Fistulas:** These are abnormal connections between different body parts such as bowel, bladder, anus etc.
- **Anal fissures:** These are small tears around the anus that cause pain.
- **Toxic megacolon:** A serious condition where the colon gets too big and can lead to a hole in the colon or death if not managed properly.
- **Perforation:** A hole in the colon that can happen due to toxic megacolon or on its own.

How is IBD treated?

The goal of treatment is to reduce inflammation and improve symptoms. Treatment at a multi-disciplinary IBD center like the Baylor Medicine Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center makes a big difference. All your physicians including gastroenterologists, surgeons and radiologists who specialize in IBD can talk to each other and make a plan just for you. Treatments often involves a combination of the following:

Medications

- Anti-inflammatory drugs
- Steroids for short-term relief
- Immune system suppressors
- Biologics to neutralize harmful proteins and reduce inflammation
- Antibiotics

Nutritional Support

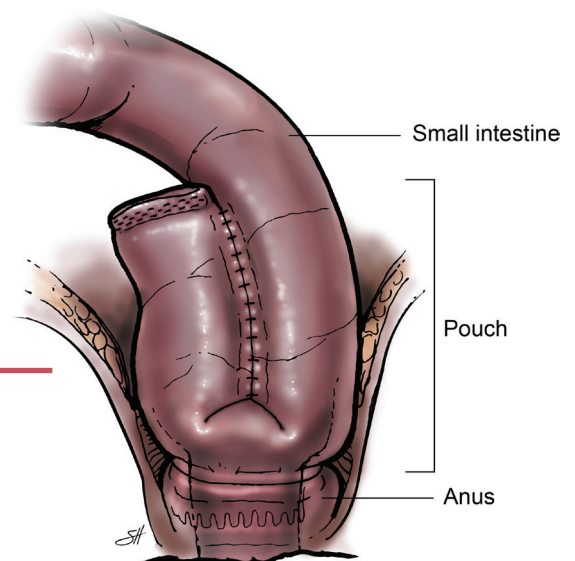
- Special supplemental diet through feeding tubes or veins, in case of severe weight loss.
- Low fiber diet may be recommended if your bowel is narrow.

Surgery

If other treatments don't work, surgery may be recommended. Most surgical procedures can be done through small incisions at specialized centers like the Baylor Medicine IBD Center.

For ulcerative colitis, the colon and rectum can be removed, an internal pouch can be created and attached to the anus that allows bowel movements through the anus. This avoids a permanent bag (ostomy).

For Crohn's disease, surgery is recommended for complications of the disease that medications cannot help with. This includes fixing fistulas, fissures, blockages, holes in bowel and removing inflamed parts that are not improving with medications.



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