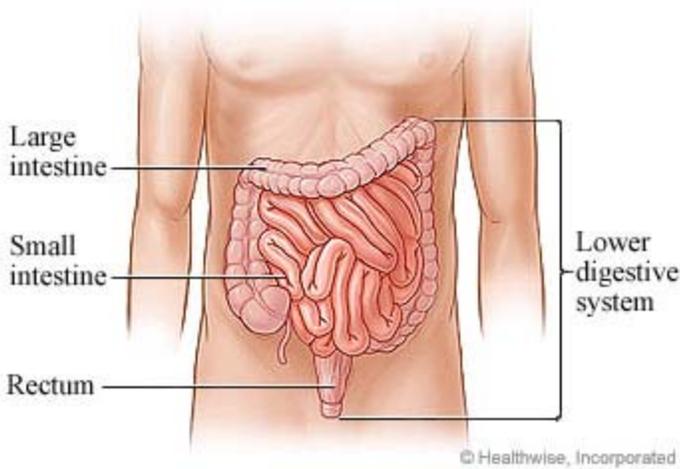


# Crohn's Disease: After Your Visit

## Your Care Instructions



Crohn's disease is a lifelong inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Parts of the digestive tract get swollen and irritated and may develop deep sores called ulcers. Crohn's disease usually occurs in the last part of the small intestine and the first part of the large intestine. But it can develop anywhere from the mouth to the anus.

The main symptoms of Crohn's disease are belly pain, diarrhea, fever, and weight loss. Some people may have constipation. Crohn's disease also sometimes causes problems with the joints, eyes, or skin. Your symptoms may be mild at some times and severe at others. The disease can also go into remission, which means that it is not active and you have no symptoms. Bad attacks of Crohn's disease often have to be treated in the hospital so that you can get medicines and liquids through a tube in your vein, called an IV. This gives your digestive system time to rest and recover.

Talk with your doctor about the best treatments for you. You may need medicines that help prevent or treat flare-ups of the disease. You may need surgery to remove part of your bowel if you have an abnormal opening in the bowel (fistula), an abscess, or a bowel obstruction. In some cases, surgery is needed if medicines do not work. But symptoms often return to other areas of the intestines after surgery.

Learning good self-care can help you reduce your symptoms and manage Crohn's disease.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. You will get more details on the specific medicines your doctor prescribes.
- Do not take anti-inflammatory medicines, such as aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). They may make your symptoms worse. Do not take any other medicines or herbal products without talking to your doctor first.
- Avoid foods that make your symptoms worse. These might include milk, alcohol, high-fiber foods, or spicy foods.
- Eat a healthy diet. Make sure to get enough iron. Rectal bleeding may make you lose iron. Good sources of iron include beef, lentils, spinach, raisins, and iron-enriched breads and cereals.

- Drink liquid meal replacements if your doctor recommends them. These are high in calories and contain vitamins and minerals. Severe symptoms may make it hard for your body to absorb vitamins and minerals.
- Do not smoke. Smoking makes Crohn's disease worse. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- Seek support from friends and family to help cope with Crohn's disease. The illness can affect all parts of your life. Get counseling if you need it.

## **When should you call for help?**

**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have severe belly pain.
- You passed out (lost consciousness).

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs of needing more fluids. You have sunken eyes and a dry mouth, and you pass only a little dark urine.
- You have pain and swelling in the anal area, or you have pus draining from the anal area.
- You have a fever or shaking chills.
- Your belly is bloated.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your symptoms get worse.
- You have diarrhea for more than 2 weeks.
- Your pain is not steadily getting better.
- You have unexplained weight loss.

## **Where can you learn more?**

Go to [www.southdenvergi.com](http://www.southdenvergi.com), log into the web portal, and enter Y197 in the search box to learn more about Crohn's Disease: After Your Visit.

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