

Title:

Crohn's Disease and its Treatment.

Name:

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Plain Language Summary:*What is Crohn's Disease?*

Crohn's Disease is a type of constant irritation of your gut that usually begins between 15-35 years of age. It usually shows up as runny or bloody stool, fever, stomach pains, and weight loss. These symptoms come and go making it hard to detect. Some days you may feel very sick and other days you will feel great. In order for your doctor to recognize it he must use medical imaging or cut out a tiny piece of the affected area to study it more closely. He then can put the puzzle pieces together to give your disease a name.

What causes Crohn's?

The exact cause of it is not known. It is thought that something tells our immune system to attack our own gut, leading to injury. This can cause the walls of our gut to thicken which leads to blockage. Another problem is holes that can form in our gut that can connect with other organs. Both of these problems can be life threatening and happen when the disease is undiagnosed, flares-up, or is not being treated correctly. Flare-ups are what happen when the symptoms of the disease become worse. Known causes of flare-ups include stress, use of Aspirin, smoking, and eating greasy foods.

How is it Treated?

The treatment is aimed at stopping our body's immune system from attacking the gut. Crohn's is a lifetime diagnosis so this does not cure the disease, but it will cause the bad symptoms to go away. Most people with Crohn's still lead an active and fulfilling life. The type of treatment depends on how severe the disease is, the number of complications, and the area of the gut that is affected.

Mesalamine, which is like Aspirin but works only in the gut, is the most used type of drug for Crohn's. It is given to keep someone with mild to moderate Crohn's disease symptom-free. Steroids are the second most used treatment. They are fast acting and more powerful. They are used for flare-ups when one's symptoms worsen. Different types of steroids have been found to work. These include Prednisone and Budesonide. Prednisone is used more but also has more bad side effects that include increases in blood sugar, upset stomach, vomiting, dizziness, and trouble falling asleep. In studies Budesonide has shown to be as good as Prednisone in improving the symptoms of Crohn's and better than Mesalamine in symptom improvement. It should be noted that Budesonide has fewer severe side effects than the other two drugs. On the other hand, it has not been shown to be as good as Mesalamine in keeping someone symptom free who has mild to moderate Crohn's. And so should not be used for this reason. There are several other drugs that are used but less often than the one's listed above. For a more complete list you can visit one of the websites below.

For Crohn's that cannot be controlled with drugs, surgery is another option. The part of your gut that is the sickest is taken out and the other two ends are rejoined. The portion that is taken out is usually small and people only have a few lasting effects from

surgery. Usually they feel much better after this is done. If you have any more questions about Crohn's, take the time to talk with your doctor or visit one of the resources listed below.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.medicinenet.com>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com>

<http://www.ccfa.org>

Key Words:

Crohn's Disease.

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