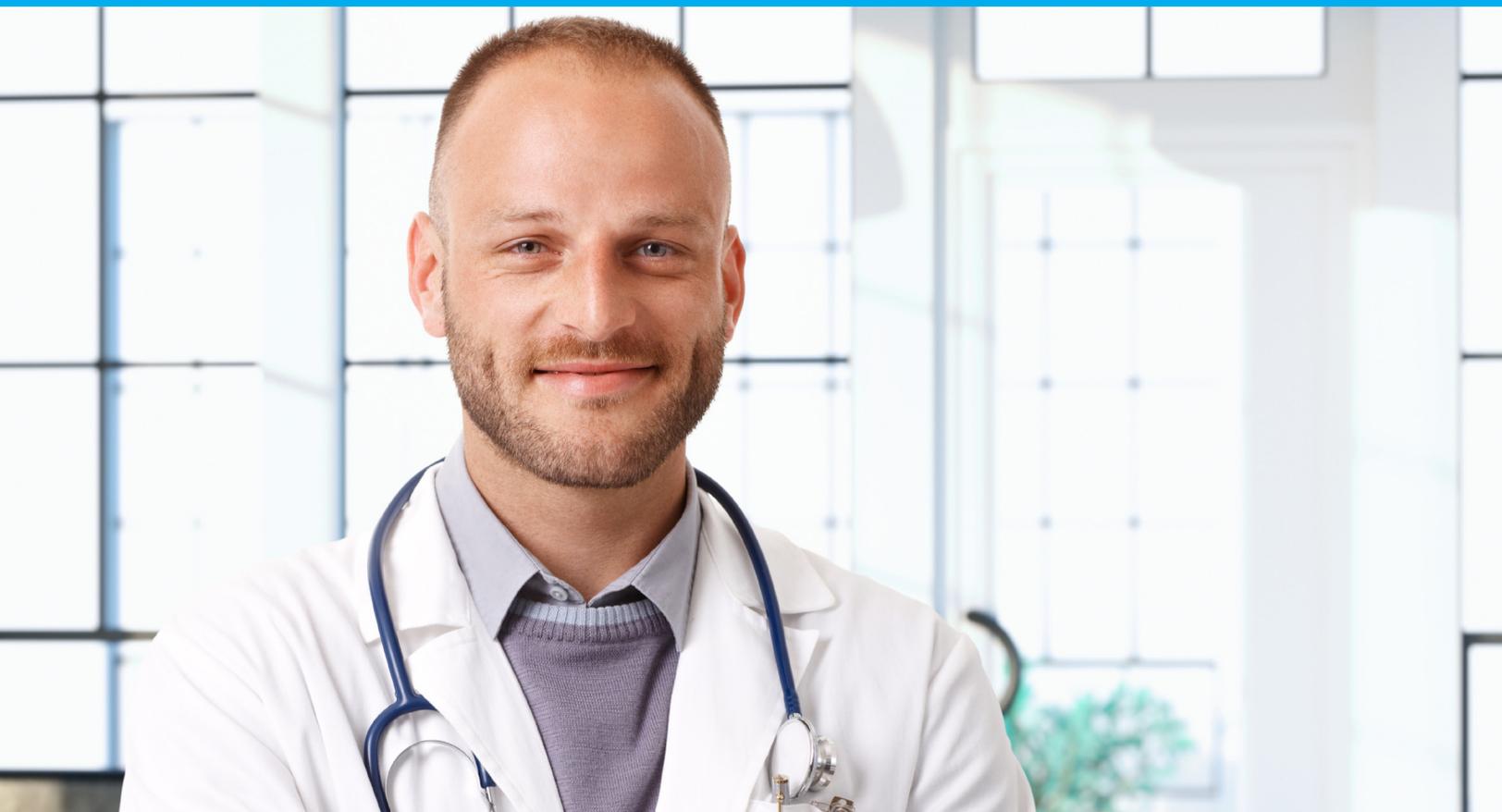


Crohn's Disease: Help for an Inflammatory Bowel Disorder



The lower section of your small intestine is called the ileum. It's connected to your colon. When the ileum (and sometimes the colon) becomes chronically inflamed, the condition is called Crohn's disease. Early symptoms include:

- Cramps and pain on the lower right side of the abdomen, usually after a meal.
- Diarrhea.
- Slight fever.
- Nausea.
- Loss of appetite and weight loss.
- Sores in the anal area. At times, rectal bleeding.
- Joint pains.
- Fatigue.

Most cases of Crohn's disease are diagnosed in persons younger than 30, but can occur in persons older, too.

Crohn's disease tends to run in families and is more common among Caucasians, especially Europeans and people of Jewish heritage. (Doctors also suspect environmental factors may be partially to blame.)

Crohn's disease is quite unpredictable: It comes and goes, triggering attacks off and on for months or years. Nevertheless, treatment is fairly successful and consists of medications – usually aspirin-like drugs, corticosteroids, immune modifiers, and possibly antibiotics, should an infection occur. Doctors recommend bed rest, especially during severe attacks, use of a heating pad to relieve abdominal cramps, and drinking as many liquids as possible to prevent dehydration.

(About 70 percent of those with Crohn's disease undergo surgery. But it's usually not a cure: Crohn's tends to recur in another portion of the intestine.)

Certain foods like milk, eggs, or wheat may irritate the intestines, and avoiding these foods in all forms seems to help control flare-ups (although it doesn't cure the condition). Avoid drinking alcohol—it, too, irritates your system. As for other dietary measures, a diet high in vitamins, protein, and carbohydrates and low in fiber is standard treatment.

Note: Crohn's disease can mimic other intestinal diseases and can only be diagnosed by a physician. If you experience any of the symptoms described, get medical attention.