



# Inflammatory Bowel Disease

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**Q: What is inflammatory bowel disease?**

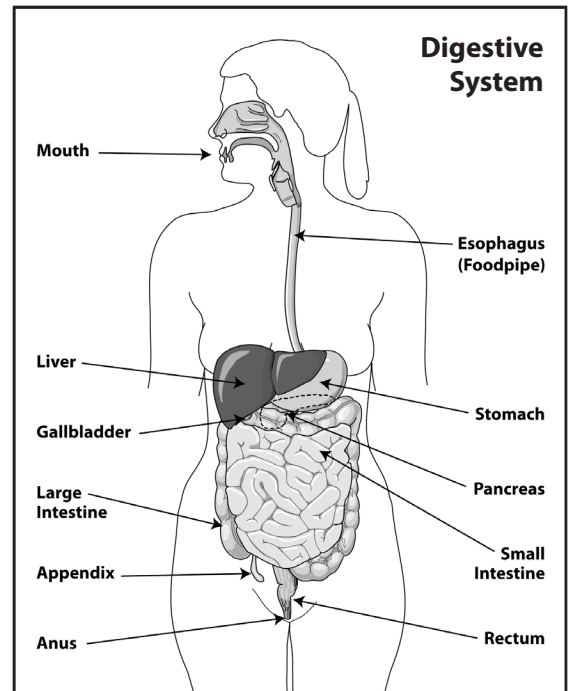
**A:** Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is the name of a group of disorders in which the intestines (small and large intestines or bowels) become inflamed (red and swollen). This inflammation causes symptoms such as:

- Severe or chronic (almost all of the time) pain in the abdomen (belly)
- Diarrhea — may be bloody
- Unexplained weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Bleeding from the rectum
- Joint pain
- Skin problems
- Fever

Symptoms can range from mild to severe. Also, symptoms can come and go, sometimes going away for months or even years at a time. When people with IBD start to have symptoms again, they are said to be having a relapse or flare-up. When they are not having symptoms, the disease is said to have gone into remission.

The most common forms of IBD are ulcerative colitis (UHL-sur-uh-tiv koh-LEYE-tiss) and Crohn's (krohnz) disease. The diseases are very similar. In fact, doctors sometimes have a hard time figuring out which type of IBD a person has. The main difference between the two diseases is the parts of the digestive tract they affect.

Ulcerative colitis affects the top layer of the large intestine, next to where the stool is. The disease causes swelling and tiny open sores, or ulcers, to form on the surface of the lining. The ulcers can bleed and produce pus. In severe cases of ulcerative colitis, ulcers may weaken the intestinal wall so much that a hole develops. Then the contents of the large intestine, including bacteria, spill into the abdominal (belly) cavity or leak into the blood. This causes a serious infection and requires emergency surgery.



Crohn's disease can affect all layers of the intestinal wall. Areas of the intestines most often affected are the last part of the small intestine, called the ileum, and the first part of the large intestine. But Crohn's disease can affect any part of the digestive tract, from the mouth to the anus. Inflammation in Crohn's disease often occurs in patches,

















