

# CROHN'S DISEASE

## TERMS TO KNOW



### **Crohn's disease glossary**

If the medical terminology you hear during your gastroenterologist appointments sounds like a foreign language, you are not alone.

These definitions will help you understand some of the things that may be happening in your body so you can have informed conversations with your gastroenterologist about your treatment options and goals.

#### **Defining Crohn's disease**

Crohn's disease is one of two inflammatory bowel diseases (IBDs) characterized by chronic inflammation. With Crohn's disease, inflammation can affect any part of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, yet inflammation may only appear in patches—leaving some sections of the GI tract unaffected.

- When you have Crohn's, chronic inflammation can be present even when you are not experiencing Crohn's symptoms. There are treatments that may help reduce chronic inflammation. Talk to your gastroenterologist to learn more.

## **Understanding Crohn's**

### **Autoimmune disease**

A chronic condition where the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy cells. Crohn's is an autoimmune disease that results from chronic inflammation in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract contributing to Crohn's symptoms and GI tract damage

### **Colon**

An organ in the digestive system that absorbs water and other elements from partially digested food to form stools that are passed out of the body. The colon is also known as the large intestine

### **Flare-up**

A period when someone with Crohn's experiences attacks of inflammation and associated symptoms. The buildup of inflammation that damages the GI tract is one factor that can contribute to flare-ups

### **Gastrointestinal (GI) tract**

The pathway that starts from the mouth and follows through the organs of the digestive system ending with the anus. It's responsible for transporting and digesting food through the body, absorbing water and nutrients, and processing waste

### **Immune system**

The body's system of fighting off invaders that can make someone sick

## **Understanding Crohn's (cont'd)**

### **Inflammation**

Your immune system's natural defense to harm, such as redness or swelling. When you have Crohn's, your immune system can cause chronic inflammation, contributing to intestinal damage and Crohn's symptoms

### **Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)**

A family of diseases that involve chronic inflammation of the digestive tract. Crohn's disease is one of the two types of IBD. IBD is not the same thing as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which can have similar symptoms but does not involve chronic inflammation

### **Intestinal lining**

A layer of cells that play important roles in the digestion of food, the absorption of nutrients, and the protection of the body from infection

### **Severity**

With Crohn's disease, severity is determined by the level of GI tract inflammation and damage, your Crohn's disease history, and how Crohn's impacts you, including your measurable symptoms

### **Small intestine**

The part of your digestive system that receives food from the stomach and sends it on to the colon. The small intestine has a beginning section (duodenum), a middle section (jejunum), and an end section (ileum)

## **Diagnosing and monitoring Crohn's**

### **Biopsy**

A medical procedure where a piece of tissue from the body, such as the colon, is collected and examined in a laboratory. Biopsies can be taken during an endoscopy to check for inflammation or damage to the colon that is visible only with a microscope

### **Colonoscopy**

An exam that uses a small camera entering through the anus to look at the colon and/or rectum and help diagnose and monitor the severity of Crohn's disease

### **Endoscopy**

A procedure where a flexible tube-like instrument with a light and lens for viewing is used to look at the inside of the GI tract by entering through the mouth or anus to help diagnose and monitor your disease and potential complications. Endoscopy is a tool that can also help your doctor determine how you are responding to your medication

### **Gastroenterologist**

A doctor who specializes in issues of the gastrointestinal tract, including inflammatory bowel diseases (IBDs) like Crohn's

### **Upper endoscopy**

A type of endoscopy that uses a small camera entering through the mouth to look at the upper end of the gastrointestinal tract (mouth, esophagus, stomach, and small intestine) to help diagnose and monitor the severity of Crohn's disease

# Treating Crohn's

## **Aminosalicylates (5-ASAs)**

Drugs that contain 5-aminosalicylic acid (5-ASA) and decrease inflammation in the lining of the intestine

## **Biologics**

Substances made from living organisms or their products and given by infusion or injection. Biologics are also called biologic agents

## **Clinical remission**

A period when someone experiences few or no Crohn's symptoms. Your gastroenterologist can confirm that you're in remission if your Crohn's disease activity index (CDAI) score is below 150

## **Corticosteroids (Steroids)**

Steroids can help reduce inflammation in your body, and can sometimes be used for short-term symptom improvement

## **Endoscopic improvement**

In Crohn's, endoscopic improvement is a visible reduction of damage of the lining in the GI tract caused by chronic inflammation, as seen during an endoscopy procedure

## **Immune modifiers (Immunomodulators)**

Medications that modify the body's immune system activity to stop it from causing ongoing inflammation

## **Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitors**

Medications that work by targeting JAKs, some of the proteins involved in inflammation

## **Mechanism of action (MOA)**

The process of how a drug works inside the body

## **Small molecule**

A drug that can enter cells easily because it has a low molecular weight. Many medications that interact with specific components in your body are small molecules. Small molecule drugs are typically administered orally

## **Steroid-free remission**

A stage of Crohn's when a patient can experience a period of time with little to no Crohn's symptoms without relying on steroids

## **Treatment response**

In Crohn's, treatment response is a reduction in symptoms and/or an improvement in overall intestinal tract appearance, as a result of taking medication (as opposed to other factors like diet or exercise)