



# Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at The Reschini Group

*Living with Crohn's disease may not be easy, but the condition can be managed. There are many support groups and other resources for those with the disease.*

## CROHN'S DISEASE

Crohn's disease causes inflammation of the digestive system, and can affect any area from the mouth to the anus. Symptoms can be extremely painful and uncomfortable, but they can be managed with treatment.

### Symptoms

Symptoms of Crohn's disease can range from mild to severe, may be gradual or sudden, can vary from patient to patient, and may be dormant for periods of time. When active, symptoms include:

- Persistent diarrhea
- Abdominal pain/cramping
- Rectal bleeding (which can lead to anemia)
- Fever lasting more than a day or two
- Ulcers
- Reduced appetite and weight loss
- Fatigue
- Skin disorders
- Eye inflammation
- Constipation
- Liver inflammation

See your doctor if you experience multiple symptoms from this list, particularly the diarrhea, abdominal pain, rectal bleeding, and/or fever.

### Causes

The cause of Crohn's disease is unknown, but experts believe that several factors may contribute to its onset:

- Abnormal immune system response to bacteria normally found in the intestine
- Heredity
- Smoking
- Age – you are more likely to develop the disease between ages 15 and 35
- Ethnicity – Caucasians seem to have a higher risk, with the highest risk for those of Jewish descent
- Environment – those in urban areas and industrial nations seem to be at higher risk

### Diagnosis

If your doctor suspects you have Crohn's disease, he or she will run several tests, which could include a physical exam, stool sample, blood test, X-ray, MRI, CT scan, colonoscopy, and/or biopsy of your intestine lining.

### Treatment

Unfortunately, there is currently no cure for Crohn's disease. However, there are several treatment options. The goals of treatment are to relieve symptoms, treat complications (such as nutritional problems or anemia), and lower the inflammation. Treatments may include:

- Drug therapy – anti-inflammatory, immune system suppressors, and short-term steroid use
- Diet – to prevent further bowel irritation and ensure adequate nutrition
- Surgery is an option for those who do not respond to drugs, though there is still no guarantee that symptoms will not return.

