

Crohn's Disease – Factsheet

Crohn's disease is an inflammatory bowel disease also known as *ileitis* or *enteritis* that predominately affects the large and small intestines, however can affect any part of the digestive track from mouth to anus. It is often diagnosed in people between the ages of 20-40 years, however can present at any time. The cause of Crohn's disease is unknown, but thought that people may develop this condition due to a defective innate immune system. Essentially the body attacks its own body tissues through cell mediated responses to stimuli such as food and 'good' bacteria.

Malabsorption and nutritional deficiencies in vitamins and minerals are common due to the gastrointestinal lining being damaged which poses a risk of developing other conditions. The most common complication associated with Crohn's disease is a blockage or obstruction of the intestine which will often involve surgery to correct and remove the damaged portion. Other complications can include; arthritis, skin problems, inflammation of the eyes and mouth, kidney stones and gallstones.

Other risk factors that can increase permeability to the gastrointestinal track include:

- Family history
- Dysbiosis (overgrowth of bad bacteria and not enough good bacteria)
- Deficient mucin (is a substance that repairs and protects and GIT lining)
- Medication
- Allergy
- Infection
- Smoking
- Inflammation

Signs and symptoms may include; pain, diarrhoea, rectal bleeding, fatigue, weight loss, constipation, fever, perianal fissures and loss of appetite.

Nutritional Recommendations:

- Avoid lactose and fructose and other short chain carbohydrates as these have been shown to cause symptoms.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, processed and refined foods.
- Eat a diet rich in fresh vegetables (should be cooked), fruit and good quality proteins.
- Eat lots of fresh fish for its omega 3 and anti-inflammatory properties.
- Drink plenty of water daily aiming for at least 2 litres and incorporating other fluids (e.g. herbal teas and fresh juices) to take the pressure off the digestive track.
- Wholegrains should be consumed if tolerated, however many patients can only tolerate 'white' grains.
- During an attack stick with mashed vegetables and soft foods until it passes.
- Take probiotics to restore gut flora and aid digestion of foods.
- Aloe vera can provide anti-inflammatory and healing benefits to the mucosal tissues.
- Slippery elm can provide soothing effects on the GIT.
- Check stool daily for bleeding.
- Regular exercise and the management of stress will also help with the overall management of Crohn's disease.

Customised nutritional plans comprising of a specific food plan with the support of nutrient/herbal supplements can be very effective in the management of Crohn's. If you require support please visit www.good4younutrition.com.au