Crohn’s Disease

What is Crohn’s Disease?
Crohn’s disease (CD) is a chronic inflammatory disorder affecting the digestive tract. Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis (UC) are similar conditions that both qualify as inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD). IBD results in the swelling or inflammation of the intestines which may result in permanent damage, as well as an impact on every day life during disease flare-ups.1

Symptoms

For many patients, Crohn’s disease occurs in the colon or the third segment of the small intestine, the ileum, but may occur in any part of the intestinal tract.2,3

Signs and symptoms of Crohn’s disease can range from mild to severe. Most often, symptoms appear gradually, but can sometimes develop suddenly or without warning.

Patients with Crohn’s disease may experience ongoing disease symptoms, or have episodes of symptom-free remission, which can be followed by relapse or flares.2

When the disease is active, symptoms may include:4

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Soreness inside the mouth
- Weight loss
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea (with or without presence of blood)
- Extraintestinal symptoms (skin rashes, arthritis, swelling of the eyes and mouth, etc.)
- Anaemia
- Sudden, uncontrollable need for restroom

Effect on Quality of Life

Living with Crohn’s disease may severely affect quality of life both physically and psychologically, particularly during disease flares and relapses.

Physical hurdles may include:5

• Pain, fatigue or discomfort from disease symptoms
• Adverse effects of medication
• Surgery, including placement of an ostomy bag or intestinal resectioning

Socio-psychological hurdles may include:6

• Stress or anxiety related to the uncertain nature of disease, including flare timing, ability to locate restroom, etc.
• Social isolation or perceived stigma surrounding bowel-related symptoms
• Poor body image

Prevalence

Crohn’s disease has been shown to affect North American and Western European countries more heavily than others, with more than 750,000 people living with Crohn’s disease in the United States alone.4 However, Crohn’s disease rates are on the rise among other countries and areas of the world.6

Studies have shown the prevalence of Crohn’s disease has increased over time, though researchers have been unable to identify a cause for this spike.7

Diagnosis & Treatment

There is no single test to identify a patient who might have Crohn’s disease.

Typically, physicians will conduct a number of tests, including:7

• Physical exam
• Computed tomography (CT) scan
• Blood test
• Intestinal endoscopy

There are treatment options available that can help manage flare-ups and keep patients in remission, including:8-10

• Corticosteroids
• Immunomodulators
• Biologics
• Elemental diets
• Surgery

Bristol-Myers Squibb is committed to identifying and pursuing new treatment options and innovative development approaches to help deliver transformational medicines for patients with Crohn’s disease and other immune-mediated diseases.

References:

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