Inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD): A complex, heterogeneous group of diseases

**Different diseases**

The two main types of IBD are:

- **Ulcerative colitis (UC)**
- **Crohn’s disease (CD)**

UC and CD can occur at any age, although people are more frequently diagnosed between the ages of 15 and 35.

**Different causes**

IBD is characterised by a complex set of disease-causing mechanisms that can include:

- Environmental
- Genetic
- Gut microbiota
- Immune-related factors

By themselves, these factors might not cause IBD. Rather, IBD is most likely triggered by complex interactions between them.²,³

**Different location**

In CD, inflammation can affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract from the mouth to anus.⁴

In UC, inflammation specifically affects the colon (i.e. large intestine).⁵

**Different gut bacteria**

There are trillions of bacteria that live in the gut and interact with our own gut cells. This interaction may be critical to maintaining our health and have a key role to play in IBD.⁶

Low diversity and altered abundance of gut bacteria have been associated with IBD.⁶

**Different symptoms**

Symptoms vary from person to person and can include:

- Abdominal pain⁷
- Cramping⁷
- Rectal bleeding⁷
- Energy loss⁷
- Fatigue⁷
- Joint pain
- Hair loss
- Skin rash
- Kidney problems

Some patients have to urgently use the bathroom more than 20 times a day.

The disease varies in intensity, with some patients having more aggressive disease than others.¹

25 - 40% of IBD patients experience symptoms outside of the intestine, such as:

- Abdominal pain
- Cramping
- Rectal bleeding
- Energy loss
- Fatigue
- Joint pain
- Hair loss
- Skin rash
- Kidney problems

**Different response to treatment**

Treatment response varies greatly from patient to patient:

- Around 80% of patients do not experience sustained full remission.⁹

Inadequate treatment of IBD can lead to permanent intestinal damage sometimes due to excessive and continuous inflammation.¹⁰

There is an unmet need for treatment approaches that control not only the symptoms reported by patients, but also the underlying biology of the disease, to help patients achieve rapid and sustained remission and live life confidently.

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³  Scientia. Dr Claudio Fiocchi – An Integrated Approach to Fighting Inflammatory Bowel Disease. [Internet; cited 2019 March 29]. Available at: https://www.scientia.global/dr-claudio-fiocchi-an-integrated-approach-to-fighting-inflammatory-bowel-disease/.

⁴  Crohn's and Colitis Foundation. Crohn’s causes. [Internet; cited 2019 March 29]. Available at:  https://www.crohnsandcolitis.com/crohns/causes


⁷  Crohn's and Colitis Foundation. What are Crohn's & Colitis? [Internet; cited 2019 March 29]. Available at: https://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org/what-are-crohns-and-colitis/

