

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

Inflammatory bowel disease is a general term used to describe diseases that causes intestinal inflammation.

There are two main forms of Inflammatory Bowel Disease. These are known as Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis which are both long-term (chronic) diseases which cause inflammation in the gastrointestinal tract- also known as the gut or bowel.

Indeterminate Colitis is a medical term used to describe inflammation of the large bowel that could be caused by either Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis. With both conditions the chances of developing either increases if there is a close family relative who also has the same condition.

Another form of inflammatory bowel disease is Microscopic colitis which is less common and is only detected by taking a tissue sample (biopsy) from the bowel.

One of the main differences between Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis is the part of the gastrointestinal tract that is affected. In cases of ulcerative colitis inflammation only affects the colon and rectum (large bowel). In cases of Crohn's disease inflammation can occur anywhere in the digestive tract from the mouth to the anus however the small intestine and in particular the part known as the ileum is the commonest part affected.

Symptoms of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

Symptoms of Inflammatory Bowel Disease can include:

- Diarrhoea
- Bleeding
- Mucus or slime with the stools
- Abdominal pain
- Weight loss
- Tiredness

Other, but less common symptoms of Inflammatory Bowel Disease can include:

- Skin rash
- Inflammation irritation around the eyes
- Painful and swollen joints

For more specific symptoms related to Crohn's disease or more specific symptoms for Ulcerative colitis please visit the Birmingham Bowel Clinic website.

How is Inflammatory Bowel Disease investigated?

When you are seen in clinic the consultant will take a full history and carry out a clinical examination. Usually this will involve a rigid sigmoidoscopy and sometimes a proctoscopy as well.

Blood tests are usually carried out to look for evidence of inflammation.

The consultant may also request that you provide stool samples to rule out infection.

Your consultant usually will recommend endoscopic examination of the bowel either by flexible sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy. Biopsies are usually taken.

Examination of the small intestine when necessary can be carried out by barium follow through examination or MRI enteroclysis. CT scanning can be very useful to assess the extent of any inflammatory changes particularly if an abscess is suspected.

How is Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) treated?

The treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Disease involves both medical and surgical treatments.

For the treatment of Crohn's disease and to read more about the treatment available for Ulcerative Colitis please visit the conditions section of the Birmingham Bowel Clinic website.

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What are the next steps?

If you think you have this condition or any of these symptoms, you will need to seek medical advice.

If you have private medical care or wish to pay to see a consultant:

Take this factsheet along to your own GP and request a referral to one of our consultants.

For more information or to make an appointment:

Contact the Birmingham Bowel Clinic on 0845 241 7762 or email enquiries@birminghambowelclinic.co.uk.