[Understanding Crohn's Disease](http://www.conversantbio.com/blog/how-to-optimize-your-cell-isolation-method-for-best-results-0)

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Many people have heard the name, but few understand what the disease really is. [Crohn’s disease](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/crohns-disease/basics/symptoms/con-20032061) is a “chronic inflammatory bowel disease that affects the lining of the digestive tract.”  The disease was named after Burrill Crohn who was the first to diagnose this disease. Crohn’s disease is difficult to diagnose because its symptoms (which include fever, nausea, weight loss, diarrhea, fatigue, abdominal pains, and rectal bleeding) are similar to other autoimmune diseases such as lupus and type 1 diabetes. Crohn’s most commonly affects the end of the small intestine and the beginning of the colon, but it may affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract, from the mouth to the anus.

The gastrointestinal tract is full of “good” bacteria that aid in the digestion of food. In normal people, the body recognizes the “good” bacteria and does not try to interfere with it or kill it. However, in patients with Crohn’s disease, the body does not recognize the bacteria as “good.”  Instead it recognizes the bacteria as foreign invaders. Cells travel to fight what they perceive to be an infection and inflammation is created. This inflammation does not subside because the “good” bacteria does not die. This leads to ulceration and the thickening of intestinal walls, which in turn creates Crohn’s disease symptoms.

Crohn’s “flare ups” are episodes of aggravated Crohn’s disease. While medications such as steroids, antibiotics, and remicade treatments usually keep Crohn’s symptoms at bay, certain outside factors may cause a flare up to occur. Scientists have not narrowed down exactly what those factors may be, but diet and stress are almost sure causes. During a flare up, the patient may be sick anywhere from 2 days to several weeks. Patients will most commonly experience extreme nausea, diarrhea, and abdominal pain along with a fever during times of these flare ups.

Currently, there are more than 700,000 Americans suffering from Crohn’s disease. However, many more people are likely to be affected and do not realize they have the disease. Men and women are at the same risk of developing this disease with the typical age range being from 15 to 35 years old. Crohn’s disease is a hereditary disease but does not have to stem directly from the disease itself. There have been many cases reported of family members having lupus, for example and other family members developing Crohn’s. There have been many studies proving that Crohn’s disease is more common in urban areas rather than rural areas. Why this may be, they do not know.

Crohn’s disease is unique. Every crohn’s patient is different. Some may experience extreme abdominal pain and no weight loss. Others experience long periods of diarrhea and a fever. Whatever the case may be, if you or a loved one think you might have Crohn’s disease, please contact your doctor right away.