



Any part of the digestive tract can become inflamed in a flare up of Crohn's Disease



Elemental diets provide essential macro- and micro-nutrients in a form that is easily absorbed

Crohn's Disease is an auto-immune condition and a form of Inflammatory Bowel Disease. Although the cause is still unknown, active Crohn's is the result of inflammation of the bowel wall. It can occur through the full thickness of the wall and in any part of the digestive tract from the mouth to the anus with areas of healthy bowel in-between.

Dietary management

Diet can play an important role in optimising your health, reducing the number of flare ups and healing flare ups. It is important that you follow the recommended nutritional guidelines in order to maintain your health, energy and nutritional status and preventing any complications.

During times of remission it is important that you maintain a healthy diet to meet your nutritional requirements. Your Dietitian will work with you on a personalised plan to help you to:

- eat smaller meals at more frequent intervals to reduce the amount of food that needs to be digested at a single time,
- drink adequate fluids to prevent dehydration,
- reduce inflammation,
- limit foods which can overstimulate your bowel, and
- identify and avoid foods that may trigger a flare up.

Recommendations during a flare up

Through periods of active flare ups your medical team may advise you to consume a liquid diet or supplement your diet with an elemental formula in addition to high dose medication to help rest the bowel.

Elemental formulas can be effective in inducing remission by reducing inflammation, improving the absorption of nutrients around partial obstructions or strictures and providing time for your bowel to rest and recover from the inflammation. If you have regular flare ups, speak to your dietitian about designing a liquid diet which is still nutritionally complete for your needs. Your dietitian should also be able to direct you where to purchase low cost nutritional supplements to help meet your needs while you're on a restrictive diet.

New research for preventing relapse

For over 50 years it has been suggested that food intolerances may be a possible cause of bowel inflammation and therefore avoidance of triggers may provide hope to prevent relapse. The premise is that in addition to causing irritable bowel symptoms such as bloating, cramping and wind, food intolerances can also cause bowel inflammation. This persistence of inflammation may then



Management of Crohn's Disease may require removing sections of your bowel resulting in a stoma



Different nutrients, salts and water are absorbed along sections of your bowel so if you have a stoma, talk to your Dietitian about your particular needs

trigger an episode of active Crohn's Disease. Ongoing tests to examine this theory have shown that in some cases, an elimination diet can reduce the frequency of flare ups in some individuals.

Although not everyone with Crohn's Disease may present with intolerance, it is a good idea for you to review what you eat with your Dietitian. You can then work together to help identify particular foods or eating patterns that may trigger adverse symptoms. Commonly reported food triggers include wheat, yeast, milk, eggs, apple, coffee, mushroom and onion.

Where to get help

If you feel that food intolerance may be an underlying cause of your bouts of active Crohn's Disease and would like to trial an elimination diet, it is crucial that you do so under the guidance of an experienced dietitian. Your dietitian will be able to assess your diet and suggest suitable replacement foods so you don't jeopardise your nutritional status. An elimination diet may continue for a period of months so it is good to have regular contact to discuss your progress and troubleshoot any problems.

It doesn't matter if you've recently been diagnosed or if you've had Crohn's Disease for years, maintaining a healthy balanced diet and lifestyle may help to prevent flare ups and help you to feel your best. For more information and to make an appointment, call us on 1300 438 550 or visit www.melaniemcgrice.com.au