

Most cases of Crohn's disease are diagnosed between the ages of 20 to 30. Since Crohn's can't be cured, you face a lifetime of managing your symptoms, a challenge that's easier when you receive expert care from the team at Pioneer GI Clinic. As board-certified gastroenterologists, they have years of experience helping people manage Crohn's disease, and they offer the most advanced treatments available, such as biologics. To schedule an appointment, call the office in Anchorage, Alaska.

What is Crohn's disease?

Crohn's disease, one of several conditions included under the umbrella of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), causes patches of inflammation in the walls of your gastrointestinal (GI) tract. Without treatment, the ongoing inflammation can penetrate deep into the intestinal wall.

The inflammation associated with Crohn's disease leads to complications such as:

- Ulcers
- Intestinal blockages
- Abscesses
- Malnutrition
- Fistulas (abnormal passages through the tissues)
- Higher risk of colon cancer

Though you can develop Crohn's in any part of your GI tract, it typically occurs in the last part of your small intestine and the first part of the colon (large intestine).

What symptoms develop due to Crohn's disease?

Crohn's disease goes through cycles of active inflammation and symptoms that alternate with periods of remission.

During a flare-up, Crohn's disease causes symptoms such as:

- Diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Weight loss
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Blood in your stool
- Frequent or urgent bowel movements

Crohn's disease also causes symptoms outside your GI tract. You may experience problems such as joint pain, skin rashes, mouth sores, and red, painful eyes.

How is Crohn's disease diagnosed?

In addition to your medical history and symptoms, Pioneer GI Clinic performs blood and stool tests to rule out other conditions that cause similar symptoms. They may also need to perform a colonoscopy, upper endoscopy, or capsule endoscopy to visually examine your GI tract.

How is Crohn's disease treated?

Your treatment for Crohn's disease focuses on relieving your symptoms and keeping the disease in remission. Your treatment may include:

Medications

Depending on the severity of your symptoms and any underlying conditions, your provider may prescribe anti-inflammation medicines, immunosuppressants, antibiotics, steroids, antidiarrheal drugs, or biologic medications.

Bowel rest

During a severe flare, your provider may recommend a liquid diet to rest your bowels and give the tissues time to heal.

Diet and nutrition

Foods don't cause Crohn's disease or trigger a flare-up. However, changing your diet during a flare goes a long way toward easing your symptoms. Since Crohn's disease interferes with your body's ability to absorb nutrients, you may need supplements to avoid a nutritional deficiency.

Surgery

When your symptoms don't improve with nonsurgical treatments, or you develop complications, your provider may recommend surgery. Surgery doesn't cure Crohn's disease, but it can significantly improve your symptoms.