

The language of inflammatory bowel disease

Abscess A localised collection of pus that may form in the abdominal cavity or in the anal area of persons with inflammatory bowel disease.

Acute (illness) Short-lived or sudden. Different from a chronic illness, which is one that lasts a long time.

Adalimumab (Humira®, Amgevita®) A biological medication that is used to treat IBD, given by injection.

Adhesion Scar tissue (often resulting from surgery) that can lead to one part of the bowel attaching itself to another.

Aetiology Cause.

Amgevita® See Adalimumab.

5-aminosalicylic acid (5-ASA or mesalazine) A medication which reduces inflammation in the colon in people with colitis and may decrease the risk of relapse. The active ingredient in drugs such as Asacol® and Pentasa®.

Anaemia A low red blood cell count. Red blood cells, which contain haemoglobin, carry oxygen to the different cells in our body. A low haemoglobin level or a low red blood cell count are lab tests that show anaemia.

Anastomosis The area where two parts of the bowel are joined at the time of surgery.

Ankylosing spondylitis A chronic inflammatory disease of the spine and adjacent joints that can cause pain and stiffness in the spine, neck, hips, jaw and rib cage. Seen sometimes in people with inflammatory bowel disease.

Antigen A substance, usually a protein, which is recognised as 'foreign' by a patient's body, so that antibodies are produced against it. Reaction between antigen and antibody may cause inflammation.

Anus The opening at the lower end of the gastrointestinal tract at the end of the rectum.

Appendix A thin blind-ending pouch of intestine attached to the caecum; that part of the colon situated in the right lower abdomen.

Appliance The combination of an adhesive and a bag that is worn over a stoma to collect bodily waste.

Arthralgia Pains in the joints frequently experienced by persons with IBD.

Arthritis Inflammation of a joint or joints that can be accompanied by pain, swelling and stiffness.

Asacol® Preparation of the drug 5-aminosalicylic acid (see also mesalazine).

Azathioprine (Imuran®) An immunosuppressant drug used to treat IBD.

Bacteria Minute organisms, millions of which are normally present in the large intestine. Some bacteria are harmful and can cause infection.

Benign Not cancerous.

Bile ducts Tube-like structures that transport bile from the liver or gallbladder to the duodenum (which is the first part of the small intestine).

Biological agents (biologicals, biologics) A category of medications that work by blocking the effects of specific substances (called cytokines) that cause inflammation. These medications are given either by injection or by an intravenous infusion.

Biopsy A small piece of tissue taken from the body for examination under the microscope by a pathologist.

Borborygmi Rumbling sounds in the bowel caused by the movement of gas through the intestine.

Bone marrow suppression The decreased manufacture of blood cells by the bone marrow (blood cells are made in the bone marrow).

Bowel Another name for the intestines, the small bowel (duodenum, jejunum and ileum), and the large bowel (colon).

Breath test Tests that help detect lactose (milk sugar) intolerance or overgrowth of bacteria in the small intestine.

Budesonide (Entocort®, Cortiment®) An oral steroid that is used to treat IBD. Budesonide is broken down very quickly by the body and usually has fewer side effects than prednisone.

Caecum The first 10-15cms of the colon, situated in the right lower abdomen. The small intestine joins the colon in the caecum.

Calprotectin A stool (faecal) test that is used to detect inflammation in the intestines.

Capsule endoscopy A procedure that uses a tiny wireless camera inside a capsule that is swallowed and takes a movie as it passes through the digestive tract.

CDAI – Crohn's Disease Activity Index A method of scoring the symptoms of Crohn's disease to determine the severity of the disease.

Cholestyramine A drug taken to absorb excessive amounts of bile acid reaching the large intestine, and hence to treat certain forms of diarrhoea.

Chronic (illness, disease) A disease that lasts a long time.

Ciprofloxacin An antibiotic medication used to treat infections.

Colectomy Surgical removal of the colon.

Colestipol (Colestid®) A drug taken to absorb excessive amounts of bile acid reaching the large intestine, and hence to treat certain forms of diarrhoea.

Colitis Inflammation of the colon (large intestine).

Colon The large intestine. The function of the colon is to absorb water. It is about 1.5 metres long and connects the small intestine to the anus.

Colonoscopy An examination of the colon performed by passing a lighted flexible telescope (colonoscope).

Colostomy A surgical operation in which the end of the colon is brought through an opening in the abdominal wall. Waste is then collected in a bag attached to the skin.

Computerised (axial) tomography scan (CT or CAT scan) An X-ray procedure that, with the aid of a computer, combines many X-ray images to produce detailed three-dimensional images.

Corticosteroid (steroid, prednisone, hydrocortisone) A drug that reduces inflammation.

C-reactive protein (CRP) A protein in the blood that is sometimes high when inflammation is present in the body.

Cyclosporin An immunosuppressant drug occasionally used in IBD.

Dietitian A specially trained individual who is qualified to assess nutritional status and works closely with the patient and doctor to ensure that an appropriate diet is being followed.

Dilated Abnormally enlarged or distended.

Duodenum The first 20-25cm of the small intestine.

Dysplasia Abnormal appearing cells that are seen under the microscope from biopsy specimens. Dysplasia can be associated with an increased risk of cancer.

EEN – Exclusive Enteral Nutrition A specialised liquid nutritional diet that is taken over a period of time to treat Crohn's disease, usually in children.

Endoscopy A general term for the examination of the inside of the body using a lighted telescope.

Enema A liquid inserted into the bowel via the anus.

Enteritis Inflammation of the small intestine.

Erythema nodosum Red, tender swellings occasionally seen on the shins and lower legs during a flare-up of IBD. They usually subside when the disease is in remission.

ESR – Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate A blood test that is sometimes high when there is inflammation in the body.

Exacerbation An aggravation of symptoms or an increase in the activity of a disease.

Extra-intestinal Occurring outside the intestines.

Faeces Motions, stools.

Familial Hereditary.

Febrile Running a fever, having a temperature.

Ferritin A blood test that measures the patient's iron reserves. Sometime the ferritin is elevated when there is inflammation in the body.

Fissure A crack or split in the skin, usually in the area of the anus.

Fistula (plural is fistulae or fistulas) An abnormal channel (false passage) between two loops of intestine, or between the intestine and another organ, or between the intestine and the skin.

Flare-up The reoccurrence of symptoms of IBD.

Flatul/Flatulence Wind.

Flexi-sigmoidoscopy See sigmoidoscopy.

Folic acid One of the vitamins responsible for the formation of the red blood cells.

Fulminant colitis Severe colitis.

Gastritis Inflammation of the stomach.

Gastroenterologist A physician specially trained in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the intestine, including Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

Gastrointestinal Tract (GI Tract) The entire passageway from the mouth to the anus. It includes the mouth, pharynx (throat), oesophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, rectum and anus.

Gastroscopy A procedure to examine the upper part of the GI tract. A thin flexible tube with a video camera at the tip, is passed through the mouth to examine the oesophagus, stomach and the first part of the small bowel (duodenum).

Gut Another word for bowel or intestines.

Haemorrhoids (piles) Swollen veins in the area of the anus.

Heartburn (reflux) A burning pain felt in the chest and usually due to reflux of stomach acid into the oesophagus or throat.

Hereditary Indicates that a disease is genetic (runs in families).

Humira® See adalimumab

Hydrocortisone A corticosteroid drug given intravenously or as an enema.

Hyperalimentation (or total parenteral nutrition or TPN) Complete nutrition given through the vein.

IBD Abbreviation of 'inflammatory bowel disease'.

Ileitis Inflammation of the lower part of the intestine.

Ileum The lower part of the small intestine.

Ileoanal anastomosis A surgical connection of the small intestine to the anus, which is done after a total colectomy (removal of the entire colon).

Ileostomy A surgical operation in which the end of the ileum is brought through an opening in the abdominal wall. Waste is then collected in a bag attached to the skin.

Immunology/Immunological The study of the body's immune system.

Immunomodulators A category of medicines that control inflammation by suppressing the immune system.

Incontinence Inability to control stools or urine.

Infliximab (Remicade®, Inflectra®)
A biologic medication given by intravenous infusion.

Infusion/Intravenous The introduction of fluid into the body via a vein.

Iritis Painful inflammation of the eyes sometimes occurring in IBD.

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) A common condition caused by altered motility of the bowels. Symptoms include abdominal discomfort and altered bowel motions. It is not a form of IBD.

-itis Indicates inflammation e.g. colitis is inflammation of the colon; proctitis is inflammation of the rectum; ileitis is inflammation of the ileum; gastritis is inflammation of the stomach.

Jejunum The middle segment of the small intestine between the duodenum and the ileum.

J-pouch Surgical procedure sometimes performed in conjunction with a total colectomy (removal of the entire colon). A pouch is a reservoir that is formed to collect and hold stool just above the anus by connecting together two loops of small intestine.

Lactase The enzyme that enables the small intestine to digest lactose, the sugar in milk.

Lactose Milk sugar.

Lactose intolerance A common disorder that can cause abdominal discomfort, bloating, diarrhoea and gas after the ingestion of milk or milk products due to the inability to digest lactose.

Lesion A general term used to describe any abnormality.

Leucocytosis An increased number of white cells in the blood.

Leucopenia A decrease in the number of white cells in the blood.

Loperamide (Imodium®) a drug used to treat diarrhoea by slowing down the motility of the intestines.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI scan)
A diagnostic procedure carried out by a machine that uses a strong magnetic field to produce computerised images of body structures.

Maintenance therapy Medical therapy taken when IBD is not active to prevent recurrence of the disease and/or flare-ups of symptoms.

Malabsorption Decreased ability of the small intestine to absorb nutrients.

6-mercaptopurine (6-MP) An immunosuppressant drug, closely related to azathioprine, used to treat IBD.

Mesalazine (5-aminosalicylic acid, 5-ASA, Asacol®, Pentasa®) A medication to treat colitis that reduces inflammation in the colon. Mesalazine does not suppress the immune system.

Methotrexate (Ledertraxate®), Methoblastin®) An immunosuppressant drug used to treat IBD.

Metronidazole (Flagyl®) An antibiotic sometimes used to treat IBD.

Mucosa (intestinal) The inner lining of the intestine.

Nasogastric tube (NG tube) A thin, flexible plastic tube passed through the nose into the stomach.

Obstruction A blockage of the small or large intestine.

Occult blood Non-visible blood in the stool, which detected by a simple laboratory test.

Oedema Accumulation of excessive amounts of fluid in the tissues resulting in swelling.

Oesophagus The tube that connects the mouth to the stomach.

Olsalazine (Dipentum®) An older medication that is very similar to mesalazine.

Osteoporosis Thinning of the bones, making them weak, brittle and more likely to fracture (break).

Ostomy A surgically created opening of the intestine onto the wall of the abdomen (see stoma).

Pathologist A doctor who specialises in examining specimens under the microscope.

Pentasa® Preparation of the drug 5-aminosalicylic acid (see also mesalazine).

Perforation A hole in the bowel wall that causes the contents of the bowel to spill into the normally sterile abdominal cavity.

Perianal The area round the anal opening.

Peritoneum The membrane lining the inside of the abdominal cavity.

Peritonitis Inflammation or infection within the abdominal cavity, often due to a perforation.

Pouch operation (ileoanal anastomosis)
See J-pouch.

Pouchitis Inflammation of the J-pouch.

Prednisone A steroid medication used to reduce inflammation in IBD.

Proctitis Inflammation of the rectum (the bottom part of the colon).

Proctocolectomy Surgical removal of the entire colon and rectum.

Proctoscopy An examination of the rectum (the very bottom of the colon), usually performed with a short, rigid,

lighted tube.

Prognosis A prediction of how a disease will be in the future.

Prophylactic therapy Preventative treatment.

PSC - Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis A liver disease that is sometimes associated with IBD in which the bile ducts become scarred.

Pyoderma gangrenosum An inflammatory condition of the skin that causes ulcerations which sometimes occurs with IBD.

Radiologist A doctor who specialises in reading X-rays, ultrasounds, MRIs, and CT scans.

Recurrence/relapse Return of disease activity.

Rectum The last part of the colon, just above the anus.

Remission The disease becoming inactive, associated with a return to good health.

Resection The surgical removal of a diseased part of the intestine.

Rheumatologist A medically qualified doctor with special training in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with diseases of the joints and muscles.

Sigmoidoscopy A limited colonoscopy in which only the lower part of the colon is examined.

Small intestine The section of the gastrointestinal tract where nutrients are absorbed, located between the stomach and the colon. The small intestine is divided into three parts: the duodenum, the jejunum, and the ileum.

Sphincter A ring of muscle surrounding an opening such as the anus (anal sphincter).

Stoma A surgically constructed opening of the intestine onto the abdominal wall over which a bag can be fitted and sealed to the skin.

Stoma nurse A nurse specialising in the care of stomas.

Stool Bowel motion, faeces.

Stricture A narrowed area of the intestinal tract due to scarring.

Sulphasalazine (Salazopyrin®) An older preparation of 5-aminosalicylic acid that also contains sulfa. See 5-aminosalicylic acid.

Suppository A bullet-shaped preparation containing a drug for insertion into the rectum.

Tenesmus The sensation of needing to empty the rectum urgently.

Terminal Ileum The lowest end of the small intestine, just before it joins the large intestine (colon).

Thioguanine An immunosuppressant drug used to treat IBD.

Toxic megacolon Severe dilatation of the colon that may lead to perforation, usually in a very severe attack of colitis.

Total parenteral nutrition (TPN) Intravenous infusion of all the patient's requirements of nutrients through the vein.

Ustekinumab (Stelara®) A biological medication that is used to treat IBD, given by injection.

Vedolizumab (Entyvio®) A biological medication that is used to treat IBD, given by intravenous infusion.

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