



Photo by Sandy Wright

# Gut Feeling

## A Natural Approach to Crohn's Disease

by O.J. Ressel, BSc, DC

deteriorates. This can be life-threatening. It has been noted that Crohn's disease increases the risk of colon cancer by as much as 20 times. This is also true for ulcerative colitis and to some extent irritable bowel syndrome. Definitely conditions that should be avoided at all cost.

### Chiropractic—Holistic Approach

Chiropractors tend to approach people suffering with irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, or Crohn's disease from a different perspective than the family physician. We use a holistic approach.

One needs to remember that we are dealing with individual human beings and not only their intestines.

Many patients, for instance, are surprised to learn that the body is a self-healing and self-regulating organism. This means that your body is designed to heal itself and to regulate its own functions. You're "on auto-pilot." In other words, the cells in your digestive tract deteriorate continuously and are replaced by brand new cells doing the same function as the originals. This "auto-pilot" is your nervous system, your own Internet! It is similar to the NASA control centre and coordinates and controls every single function of your body. As long as it is able to control your body with no interference, you should have the best health possible. If, however, there is some sort of interference to the normal function of your nervous system, your body will simply not work the way it was designed.

In Crohn's disease, the intestinal cells deteriorate but are not necessarily replaced by new ones. Over the course of time, the digestive system essentially deteriorates. A number of studies have actually shown that Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis

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**Y**our digestive system is essentially a long tube that begins at your mouth and ends at your other end. It has one purpose, which is to break down food and extract energy and nutrients from it. Your digestive organs—esophagus, stomach and intestines—are simply modifications of this tube.

This system is very efficient as long as it is functioning normally. Many people, however, suffer from a malfunction of their digestive tract. In fact, the three most common conditions affecting intestinal function I see in my practice are, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. Although not the same, they all have a great deal in

common and escalate in severity.

Crohn's disease, the most serious, is a very chronic and long-term ulceration of the digestive tract. The condition itself extends through the wall of the intestine and involves all layers of your "digestive tube."

Ulcerative colitis on the other hand involves mainly the internal intestinal layers called the mucosa and the submucosa layers. Patients affected by this condition suffer from chronic diarrhea, rectal bleeding, abdominal cramping, pain, fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, loss of weight, malabsorption, malnutrition and headaches.

Crohn's disease can be seen in the early teens to early 30s. If left untreated, bowel function gradually



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are essentially neurologically based. This means that the nervous system is no longer able to control the normal function of the intestinal area.

Chiropractors are mainly concerned with nervous system function. We check the spine to make sure there is no interference to the normal workings of nerves which control your digestive system. Our profession has had a great deal of success in helping people with these three afflictions of the intestinal tract.

## Supplement Support

As well as seeing your chiropractor, which I feel is essential, there are a number of things that you can do to help your body and to help your intestinal area function better. A hot water bottle placed on your stomach when you are experiencing severe cramping will offer considerable relief. Here are some other recommendations:

**Charcoal tablets** will help absorb excess gas for those who experience bloating. These are not to be used for a prolonged time because they also absorb most of the nutrients in the digestive system.

**Slippery elm powder** can be of considerable benefit. It tends to relax the muscles of the intestinal wall and ease cramping.

**Multi-vitamin and mineral complex** that contains copper, manganese, selenium and potassium. Crohn's disease is characterized by intestinal malabsorption and these elements are essential.

**Vitamin A**, approximately 50,000 IU of daily, unless of course you are pregnant. You may take this in a capsule form, but I suggest that you put raw peeled carrots through a juicer and have pure carrot juice every single day. The reason I suggest carrots be peeled is that the skin contains most of the chemicals and additives which can irritate your bowel.

**Vitamin E.** Vitamin A and vitamin E are essential for repair of the epithelial tissue of the intestinal tract.

**Calcium and magnesium**, at least 2,000 mg daily because of the malabsorption one may be experiencing.

**Vitamin C** in very high doses combined with bioflavonoids is essential, as this prevents inflammation and increases your immune response. I suggest at least 5,000 mg. per day, taken in a buffered preparation, so that it does not upset your stomach.

**Garlic** capsules are of great benefit in that they prevent free radicals from attacking the part of the intestine which is inflamed. Garlic has also been known to aid in the healing process.

**Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> and folic acid** are crucial in dealing with Crohn's disease. These are poorly assimilated from the gut, so you may want to see your physician regarding having regular injections. These may also be taken in a sublingual form under your tongue.

**N-acetylglucosamine (NAG)** is also important in that it protects the intestinal lining from the enzymes that could damage it. Otherwise, you would literally digest yourself!

**Glutamine**, which is an amino acid, should also be taken on an empty stomach. It is better taken with juice or water, not milk, and the absorption of it is enhanced

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when vitamin C is taken at the same time.

The solution is to maintain the intestinal lining that absorbs nutrients from the food that you eat. Taking an amino acid complex is also a good idea as it tends to soothe the intestines.

### Dietary Solutions

Drink lots of fluids. Steamed or distilled water is excellent; clear, fresh spring water is also wonderful. Herbal teas and fresh juices are terrific. You may not like this next one; however, cabbage juice is wonderful! And of course I have already recommended carrot juice. Chewing papaya seeds will be helpful, as they contain enzymes which may aid in digestion.

Eliminating all dairy foods from your diet will be of tremendous help. Dairy foods are difficult to digest and they are mucus-producing. Avoid alcohol, caffeine and carbonated beverages such as Pepsi or Coke. You probably don't realize this, but if you spill a can of Coke on a freshly waxed floor, it will eat the wax right off the floor. Imagine what it does to your insides!

Chocolate, eggs, foods with artificial additives or preservatives, or fried or greasy foods, as well as spicy foods and tobacco, are very irritating to the digestive system. As well, try to avoid refined carbohydrates, such as boxed cereals, cookies and cake.

I recommend a good diet of non-acidic, fresh vegetables, raw or slightly cooked such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, carrots, celery, turnips, spinach and cabbage. You can steam, boil, bake or broil all of these—it really doesn't make much difference. However, if you boil them for a long period of time, you destroy the nutritional value of most foods.

You also need to remember that anyone suffering from Crohn's disease has a general nutritional deficiency, and may require approximately 30 per cent more protein than normal. If chronic diarrhea is present, you also need extra electrolytes to balance your body chemistry. Corticosteroids or anti-inflammatory drugs tend to suppress protein synthesis and inhibit normal calcium absorption by increasing excretion of vitamin C in the urine. For this reason, I suggest you take multi-vitamins to balance your chemistry.

It is important that you avoid stress as much as possible. Our mental states tend to control our physiology and is deeply intertwined with our body functions. If you are suffering from an acute attack, it is important that you have rest and peace of mind. This will be of tremendous benefit in helping your body deal with this condition. ■

*O. J. Ressel is a chiropractor practising in Burlington, Ontario.*

#### Recommended Reading:

##### **Breaking the Vicious Cycle**

by Elaine Gottshall 161pp (sc) \$16.95

##### **Colon Health**

by N. Walker 126pp (sc) \$11.95

##### **Dietary Wellness: Prescription for Cooking**

by J. Balch/P. Balch 310pp (sc) \$22.95

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