

## **Glossary of IBD Terms**

Adapted from: Managing your Child's Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis  
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**Abscess** - A localized collection of pus. Abscesses may form in the abdominal cavity or in the rectal areas of Crohn's disease patients.

**Anastomosis** - A surgical connection.

**Anemia** - A blood related condition characterized by abnormally low amounts of hemoglobin and red blood cells.

**Aphthous ulcers** – Small, whitish, painful ulcers, commonly known as cankers, which may occur in the mouth with the onset of IBD symptoms. They appear similar to the early lesions of Crohn's disease sometimes found in the colon.

**Arthralgia** - Pains in the joints frequently experienced by people with IBD.

**Arthritis** - Swelling and pain involving one or more joints that may be experienced by persons with IBD, especially those with colonic involvement.

**Barium enema** - An X-ray examination of the colon performed after liquid barium has been used to coat the lining of the rectum. The purpose of the barium is to coat the colon, making it visible to X-rays.

**Biopsy** - A small piece of tissue taken from the body for purposes of examination under a microscope. Biopsies are routinely obtained from the inner lining of the GI tract and may be useful in diagnosing IBD. Biopsies are also employed to monitor the progress of medications being taken to alleviate the symptoms of these diseases. Biopsies may also be employed to look for the development of cancer cells, particularly in persons who have had ulcerative colitis for more than 10 years.

**Breath test** - Tests in which air from the breath is analyzed. Breath tests are often done to look for evidence of lactose intolerance, an absence of the enzyme required to digest milk sugar.

**Colectomy** - Surgical removal of the colon.

**Colonoscopy** - A test in which a flexible, lighted tube is inserted through the rectum to examine the colon. Biopsies may be taken as a part of the

test. Sedatives are usually given to make this procedure more tolerable.

Colostomy - A surgical opening of the colon on the abdominal wall enabling fecal waste to collect in a bag or pouch. A colostomy is done to bypass diseased or surgically removed colon.

CT Scan - A test in which an X-ray machine takes many images of a region of the body from different angles. A computer is used to assemble all the pictures into complete images of internal organs.

Continent ileostomy - The surgical creation of an ileal pouch inside the lower abdomen to collect fecal waste after colectomy for ulcerative colitis. No appliance is required. The pouch is emptied regularly with a small tube inserted through a nipple opening in the lower front part of the abdomen.

Distention - An uncomfortable feeling of swelling in the abdomen often caused by excessive amounts of gas and fluid in the intestine. Severe distention may be a sign of intestinal obstruction or blockage.

Edema - Accumulation of excessive amounts of fluid in the tissues, resulting in swelling.

Elemental diet - Medically prescribed nutrition provided to IBD patients in the form of pre-digested liquids containing all necessary nutrients. These preparations are used to help IBD patients gain weight and sometimes to assist in the healing of intestinal inflammation during disease flare-ups.

Endoscopy - A general term referring to the examination of the digestive tract with the help of a lighted tube inserted into the body. The types of endoscopy most often associated with IBD are esophagogastroduodenoscopy (upper endoscopy), colonoscopy, and sigmoidoscopy (lower endoscopy).

Enema - The injection of a liquid into the rectum for cleaning or therapeutic purposes.

Episcleritis - The inflammation of the sclera or white of the eyes.

Erythema Nodosum - Red tender swellings on the lower legs occasionally seen during flare-ups of IBD. Although these lesions are indications of disease activity, they usually subside without a trace when the disease is treated.

Exacerbation - A worsening of symptoms or an increase in disease activity, also known as a relapse or flare-up.

Fissure - A crack in the skin, usually in the area of the anus in Crohn's disease.

Fistula - An abnormal inflamed channel most often occurring between two loops of intestine or between the intestine and another structure, such as the bladder, vagina, or skin. Fistulas are much more common in Crohn's disease than in ulcerative colitis.

Flare-up - See exacerbation.

Folic Acid - One of the vitamins responsible for maintaining adequate production of red blood cells by bone marrow. A deficiency of folic acid may occur in IBD patients, particularly in those taking sulfasalazine. Oral supplements of folic acid are often provided to those with folic acid deficiency.

Gastroenterologist - A physician specialized in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with gastrointestinal diseases.

Granulomas - Microscopic abnormalities within the intestinal wall detectable only by biopsy; characteristic of Crohn's disease but not ulcerative colitis.

Gut - Another word for the intestine or bowel.

Hemorrhoids - Dilated, often painful veins susceptible to bleeding within the lower rectum and anus, sometimes seen as a complication in patients with IBD.

Hyperalimentation - See parenteral nutrition.

Ileoanal anastomosis - an operation for ulcerative colitis. After removal of the large intestine (colectomy), a pouch is made from the lower region of the small intestine (ileum). This pouch is attached directly to the anal opening. Stools are then evacuated through the anus in a normal manner. Also known as the ileo-anal pull through.

Ileostomy - The diversion of fecal waste to a surgically created attachment of the ileum to the abdominal wall. Waste collects in a bag or appliance attached to the skin by special adhesive.

Incontinence - The inability to retain feces, resulting in leakage to undergarments. In IBD, this usually occurs as a result of rectal inflammation.

Inflammation - A condition characterized by pain, heat, redness and swelling.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) - Abnormal contractions of the small and large intestine that often cause diarrhea and abdominal pain. IBS is often mistakenly called spastic colitis, although IBS is not associated with actual injury (inflammation) of the intestine and, therefore, has no relationship to IBD.

Laxative - A remedy that moves the bowels slightly without pain or violent action.

MRI - Magnetic resonance imaging, a radiologic procedure that makes use of a superconducting magnet, which then vibrates hydrogen molecules within the body and provides images of a particular part of the body.

Mucus - A clear or whitish jelly-like substance produced by the intestine which may be found in the stool.

Nasogastric tube - A thin, flexible tube passed through the nose into the stomach. Also known as an NG tube. This tube can be used to withdraw fluid and air that may collect in the stomach when the bowel is obstructed or following intestinal surgery. It can also be used to deliver a liquid diet directly into the stomach.

Nuclear scan - A test done by a radiologist in which a material is injected intravenously in order to illuminate a particular organ or organs. In IBD, red cell scans are sometimes used to look for sources of bleeding. White cell scans are used to look for abscess pockets.

Obstruction - A blockage of the small or large intestine preventing the normal passage of intestinal contents. In Crohn's disease, obstruction may be caused by narrowing (stricture) or spasms of the intestine. Signs of obstruction are vomiting, abdominal pain, and distention of the abdomen.

Occult blood - Blood invisible to the naked eye which is found in the stool. It is often an indication of intestinal inflammation or of relapsed IBD. Occult blood is ordinarily detected in laboratory tests.

Parenteral nutrition - An effort to provide some or all of the body's nutritional needs intravenously through a special intravenous (IV) line termed a catheter. Total parenteral nutrition (TPN) is used to provide adequate nutrition to severely ill or malnourished IBD patients. It is also sometimes used to provide bowel rest when medications are not working satisfactorily, or to prepare poorly nourished patients for surgery.

Perforation - An abnormal hole in the intestinal wall which causes intestinal contents to spill into the normally sterile abdominal cavity, leading to inflammation (peritonitis) or abscess formation.

Perianal - An area around the anal opening which may become inflamed and irritated in persons with IBD, especially Crohn's disease.

Proctocolectomy - surgical removal of the entire colon and rectum.

Pyoderma Gangrenosum - A type of skin sore that sometimes occurs on the extremities of persons with ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease.

Remission - A diminishing or cessation of symptoms or disease activity.

Resection - Surgical removal of a diseased portion of intestine.  
Reattachment of the two ends of healthy bowel is called anastomosis.

Sclerosing cholangitis - A rare type of liver disease that may occur in association with IBD. It is more common in adults than in children.

Sigmoidoscopy - A test in which a lighted tube is passed through the anus and the sigmoid colon. Biopsies may be taken through the sigmoidoscope. Sedation is sometimes needed for patient comfort during the procedure.

Stricture - A narrowed area of intestine caused by inflammation or scar tissue.

Suppository - A semi-solid medical substance commonly shaped like a cylinder or cone, for insertion into the rectum. Suppositories often serve as a vehicle for topical medicines intended to reduce inflammation.

Tenesmus - The persistent urge to empty the bowel or bladder, with involuntary, ineffectual straining efforts.

Toxic megacolon - A rare but sudden and extreme widening of the colon,

more common in ulcerative colitis than Crohn's disease. A serious condition, which may lead to severe illness or perforation, sometimes necessitating colectomy.

Tube feeding - Delivery of a liquid diet by a tube, usually passed through the nose into the stomach or small intestine.

Ultrasound examination - A test employing sound waves (sonar) performed by a radiologist to identify internal body structures. In a person with IBD, an abdominal ultrasound exam might be used to look for an abscess.

Upper endoscopy - Endoscopic examination of the upper gastrointestinal tract with a lighted tube to look for abnormalities of the stomach and upper small intestine in particular. Sedation is given for comfort during the procedure.

Upper GI series - An x-ray examination of the esophagus, stomach, and upper small intestine (duodenum). X-rays are taken after liquid barium is swallowed on an empty stomach. The test can be extended to permit the illumination of the entire small intestine, including the ileum. The x-ray is then known as an upper GI series with small bowel follow-through.

Uveitis- A complication of IBD affecting the eyes, causing redness and discomfort and requiring treatment by an ophthalmologist.