

## **Achieving more with IBD**

### **Introduction**

When you are diagnosed as having IBD, you begin a journey – you have a name for your symptoms, and you have a basis from which to move forward. Your medication and treatment can begin.

You may be at the start of your journey, or further along if you have been living with IBD for a while. Whatever your situation, without the appropriate support, it can be difficult to travel on the IBD journey. As with any chronic disease, you must trust yourself to respond appropriately to your feelings, and learn to develop coping/managing/empowering resources and techniques to live a full life with your disease.

IBD is a perplexing disease to live with. Periods of remission, free of symptoms, alternating with periods of active disease (sometimes called 'flares') leave you feeling well and at one with your peers one week, and then feeling unwell and out of synch with others the next. This may give you the perception that you can't take control of your illness, or your life, and in turn (if you and your family/friends don't understand your challenges) may make communication of your feelings difficult.

However, having IBD does not mean that you should impose limits on your life. You can travel, play sports, have a fulfilling job and enjoy the company of your family. Joining and actively contributing to an association related to IBD can also be a positive influence and improve your self-esteem and confidence. You can aim to live with your IBD, not merely survive; to manage your IBD – not let your IBD manage you!

In the following sections we will give you advice on how to manage and enjoy activities which others take for granted and which, with a little thought and preparation, you too will be able to do easily.