

Crohn's Disease

Treatment plan for Crohn's disease - Introduction

A management plan is a very personal item. It is a roadmap of how you, with help from your healthcare specialist, can manage your illness. It will help you understand your illness and its symptoms, what medications to take, what alternative therapies might be suitable at any given time, where to look for support. But most importantly, your management plan enables you to actively participate in managing your illness. The information in this section will explain in some detail what a management plan is and how you can be proactive in managing your Crohn's disease.

What is a treatment management plan?

A management plan is your roadmap to managing Crohn's disease. It will also help you better understand your illness. You can use it to help track your progress over time and know what to do if a problem arises. Together, you and your doctor will develop your plan to include information such as:

- Your medication and how and when to take it
- How often to check back with your doctor to re-evaluate how you are doing
- Signs and symptoms to watch for, what to do and who to contact
- Next steps if your current treatment doesn't work or if your illness becomes worse
- Other treatments or approaches to help manage your illness, such as nutrition, exercise, counselling, symptom-specific medication or other lifestyle changes
- Resources you can turn to for additional support, such as a nurse hotline or patient associations offering Crohn's disease support groups in your area.

Ideally, your management plan will be written down so you can keep it with you and refer to it whenever you want. It should be flexible so that you and your doctor can revisit it regularly and make adjustments from time to time.

Other members of your healthcare team may also be involved in developing and following your management plan, such as a nurse, nutritionist, surgeon, general practitioner and pharmacist. Caregivers, spouses and other family members or friends who are involved in your care may also be involved in the process.

Your plan may also reflect personal objectives such as being able to travel regularly, continue to work full-time, or care for children or an elderly parent, and the care designed to support those objectives.

Getting the most from your management plan

Life with Crohn's disease can have many twists and turns, and your management plan can help you and your loved ones navigate the bumps in the road as well as the smooth stretches along the way. Most importantly, a management plan gives you a clear understanding of how you and your doctor are working together to get your illness under control, and keep it under control. It can bring peace of mind when you are unsure of the next step or wondering what will happen if your Crohn's disease changes, or its management doesn't go the way you expected. It can help remind you why it is important to continue taking your treatment as prescribed. It also represents your joint commitment to managing your illness and staying on track with your treatment.

You and your healthcare team: a partnership

Your gastroenterologist is a trained specialist in Crohn's disease and is usually your main point of contact for treatment, managing your symptoms and ensuring your general health and well-being. In some situations, your main point of contact may be your general practitioner, with input from a gastroenterologist or surgeon. Some hospitals also have nurse specialists who are specially trained to help people with Crohn's disease, and they can provide education, support and act as a liaison between the hospital and the community in providing your care.

No matter which of these scenarios you are in, you should ideally work with your doctor and other members of your healthcare team to develop a plan that reflects your treatment goals and

expectations. The more involved you are in the process, and the more open and honest you are about your needs, wishes, preferences and concerns, the more relevant and useful the plan will be for you.

Your role

Once your plan is developed, in between doctor visits, your role in managing your Crohn's disease is very important. Here are some of the most important things you can do to stay in control of your illness:

- Be involved in the proactive management of your own health every day
- Know when and how to take care of your general health
- Follow your management plan and take your medication
- Ask questions if you are concerned, and seek help if a problem arises