

Your IBD Consultation

What happens in the IBD consultation?

It is normal to feel apprehensive prior to your IBD consultation, especially if your symptoms are severe or if you think your disease may be getting worse. It may be reassuring to remember that your physician is there as a partner in your care, and that he or she will be able to explain every step in the disease management process before it happens. Additionally, by having a clear idea of what happens in a consultation and why, you will know what to expect and alleviate your fears. Here is a list of the types of things your gastroenterologist may do during a normal visit:

- Take a detailed medical history by asking questions about your general health, recent symptoms, symptom severity and impact on your daily life
- Look at your colon using an instrument called an endoscope, which is a long, thin tube that is inserted through the anus. This procedure is called a colonoscopy and it is used to check for inflammation, bleeding or ulcers
- Examine your stool for signs of blood
- Discuss your treatment with you and make any necessary adjustments to help you better manage your symptoms
- Take blood tests or do other exams to measure the progress of your IBD, specifically to see if there are signs of inflammation
- Refer you to other specialists (eg, a dietician or a counsellor) for additional support.

What is my role in the consultation?

To gain maximum benefit from your consultation, come prepared with questions you want to ask, raise any concerns and answer questions openly and honestly. Remember, your gastroenterologist is there to help you and the more information you can provide, the better you can help that process.

Some people with IBD have said they feel depressed or out of control, and it is helpful to focus on the things in their lives they can control. Here are some ways you can play an active role in the management of your IBD:

- Take your medication as prescribed, and tell your doctor how it is working and if you have any side effects
- If you have problems taking your medication, eating healthily or reducing your stress levels, think of ways to solve those problems - for example, ask your doctor about taking your medication in the mornings rather than the evenings if that suits you better
- Keep track of your symptoms in a diary and report them back to your doctor so he or she can stay updated on how you are coping.

These are just a few ideas: write down anything else you can think of to do to help play an active role in the management of your IBD, and take it with you to your consultation.

At times when your symptoms are really bad, and you feel like doing very little, give yourself permission to do less than you would normally and don't push yourself too hard. When you are unwell, consider asking friends and family to help with the things you would normally do yourself.