

# Module 2: Inflammatory Bowel Disease

## Lesson 2 *Crohn's Disease*

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### Introduction

Meet David. David is a 10-year-old boy who loves soccer and plays the drums in his elementary school band. For about a week, David has been complaining to his parents about stomach pain and diarrhea. Today his mom is taking him to see his pediatrician, Dr. Salerno.

Dr. Salerno notes that David has not grown or gained weight at the expected rate in the last year compared with other boys his age. He prescribes medications to help with diarrhea and pain; however he has a suspicion based on David's medical and family social history that his symptoms and signs may be related to inflammatory bowel disease. David's older cousin Jake has Crohn's disease. Dr Salerno wants to schedule further testing as soon as possible.

There are several causes of diarrhea and stomach pain. Additionally, the delay in David's growth may either be normal or it may be related to inadequate nutrition or psychosocial factors. Alternately, he may have an endocrine or metabolic disorder, inherited condition, another chronic illness, or it may be idiopathic or of unknown cause.<sup>25</sup> Delays in growth may also be caused by use of certain medications.

This lesson will review more details about Crohn's disease. We'll learn more about David in the next module.

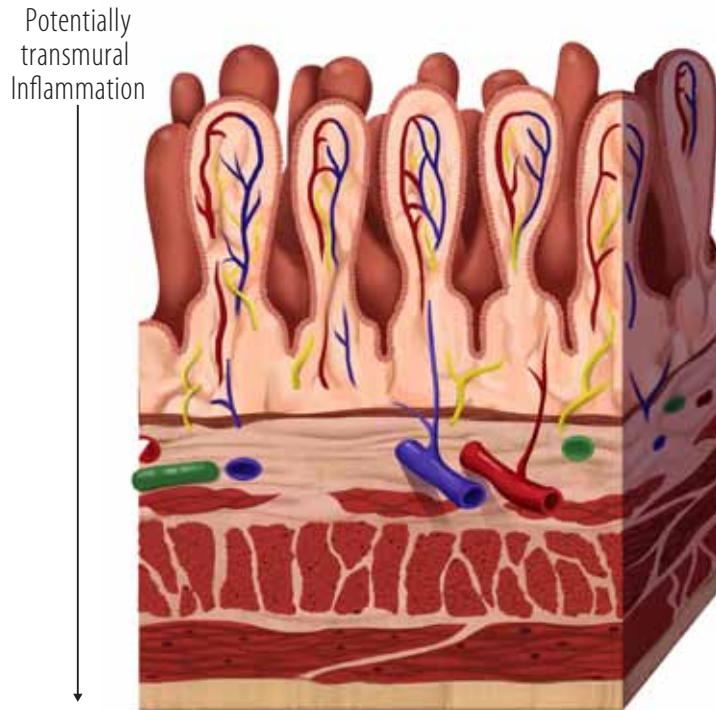
### Learning Objectives

At the completion of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe the locations of inflammation in Crohn's disease
- Describe the signs and symptoms of Crohn's disease
- Describe intestinal and perianal complications of Crohn's disease
- Explain early and later pathologic findings in Crohn's disease
- Explain the contribution of genetics to Crohn's disease
- Discuss the proposed pathophysiology of Crohn's disease
- Describe severity classifications of Crohn's disease defined by the American College of Gastroenterology
- Explain the Crohn's disease course and prognosis
- Describe features unique to pediatric Crohn's disease

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### Crohn's Disease Introduction

One of the 2 most common types of inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn's disease, or CD, is a chronic, idiopathic, inflammatory disease of the GI tract with no known cure. In patients with CD, inflammation:

- May involve any or all parts of the GI tract from the mouth to the anus
- Most commonly occurs in the ileum and the colon
- May be but is not always transmural, potentially affecting the mucosa through to the serosa
- Is patchy, with skip areas
- May be granulomatous<sup>2,8</sup>

### Crohn's Disease Signs and Symptoms

The diagnosis of CD can be difficult because symptoms can overlap with other inflammatory bowel diseases or other GI conditions.<sup>8</sup>

Characteristic symptoms and signs of CD are<sup>8,13</sup>:

- Chronic or nocturnal diarrhea, which is the most common complaint and includes increased stool frequency and reduced consistency
- Abdominal pain, which is persistent
- Weight loss
- Fever
- Rectal bleeding

About one-third of patients with CD experience anemia as a consequence of blood loss or vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency.

The symptoms and signs of CD are determined by the:

- Site of inflammation in the GI tract
- Extent of inflammation through the intestinal wall
- Severity of inflammation
- The presence of intestinal and extraintestinal complications<sup>13</sup>