

# The **IMPACT**

## of Inflammatory Bowel Diseases (IBD)

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF CROHN'S AND ULCERATIVE COLITIS ASSOCIATIONS (EFCCA)

MAY 2014

### WHAT IS IBD?

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) comprises a group of chronic conditions that cause inflammation in the lining of the digestive tract and affects over 2.2 million people in Europe (five million worldwide). Crohn's disease (CD) and ulcerative colitis (UC) are the most common forms of IBD. Some patients have features of both of these diseases and are given a diagnosis of indeterminate colitis.

**IBD has been increasing since the mid-twentieth century and is linked to a Westernised lifestyle.**

IBD has been linked to a Westernised environment and lifestyle, with its incidence increasing dramatically over the past 50 years in developed countries. The highest prevalence of disease is seen in populations in North America and Northern Europe; however,

a slow and steady increase in prevalence is now being described in the developing world as well, making IBD a global disease.

**IBD symptoms can have a detrimental impact on quality of life.**

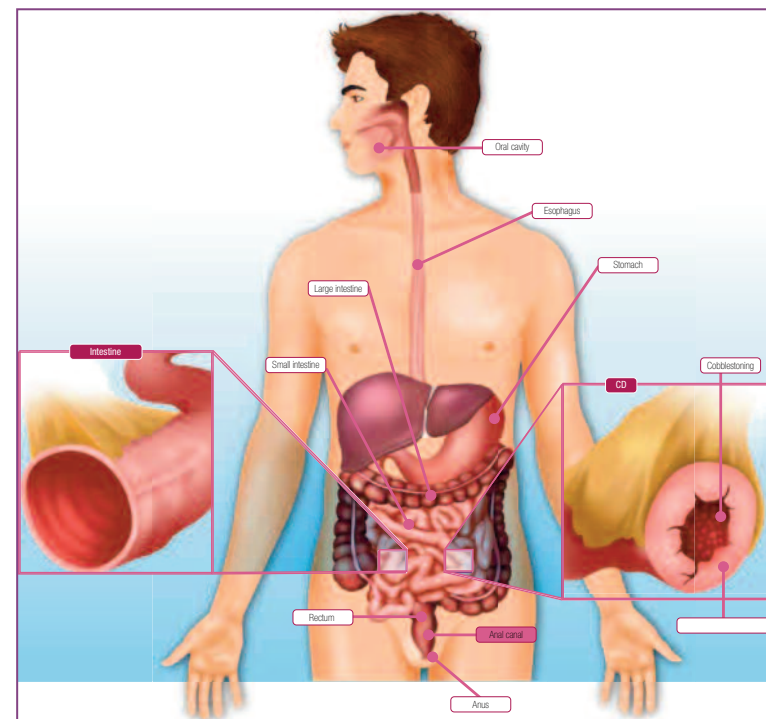
People with IBD experience episodes of diarrhoea, abdominal cramps and pain, bleeding from the rectum, weight loss, fever and fatigue. Furthermore, ongoing intestinal inflammation leads to progressive damage to the digestive tract, often requiring surgery and resulting in serious and life-threatening complications.

IBD is a debilitating disease that can have a detrimental impact on quality of life and ability to work. It runs a waxing and waning course in terms of symptom severity: when inflammation is

severe, the patient experiences a flare-up of symptoms; however, when inflammation is minimal or absent, the patient is symptomless and is considered to be in remission.

While the exact cause of IBD is not clear, it is thought to involve an inappropriate immune reaction by the body against food and normal bacteria in the digestive tract. People who develop IBD are likely to have a genetic makeup that makes them more susceptible to environmental or microbial factors that can trigger the disease.

IBD is incurable at present; however, patients can receive medical treatment that aims to suppress the abnormal inflammatory response and heal the lining of the digestive tract. This induces and maintains resolution of symptoms, allowing patients to achieve long-term remission.



**Although there is no cure for IBD, its symptoms and impact on a patient's life can be minimized by appropriate medical management.**

