

# Inflammatory Bowel Disease in the Black/African American Community



## What Is Inflammatory Bowel Disease?

Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are chronic, lifelong inflammatory diseases that affect the digestive system. Together, they are known as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Crohn's disease can affect any part of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract from the mouth to anus, while ulcerative colitis is associated with inflammation in the large intestine. IBD is often confused with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), but they are very different conditions.

These diseases cause inflammation of the intestine and lead to ongoing symptoms and complications. Some symptoms include: persistent diarrhea, abdominal pain or cramps, rectal bleeding, fever, weight loss, fatigue, joint, skin, or eye irritations, and/or delayed growth in children. There is no known cause or cure for IBD, but fortunately there are many effective treatments to help control it.

## Who Is Affected by Inflammatory Bowel Disease?

- Nearly 1 in 100 Americans is diagnosed with IBD.
- Men and women are equally likely to be affected by IBD.
- IBD can occur at any age, but Crohn's disease is most often diagnosed in adolescents and adults between the ages of 20 and 30.
- Ulcerative colitis can occur at any age, though most people are diagnosed in their mid-30s.
- Although historically considered a White disease, IBD can affect people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

## How Does IBD Impact the Black/African American Community?

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the incidence of IBD in the United States among racial and ethnic groups. IBD has increased three times faster in non-Whites in 40 years. Additionally, the IBD incidence rate has increased among immigrants. Furthermore, numerous studies have found that IBD affects the Black/African American Community differently than the White population. For example, Black/African American IBD patients:

- Are more likely to have a higher rate of specific complications such as arthritis and eye inflammation compared to White patients.
- Are more likely to be hospitalized and have an increase in readmission rates compared to White patients.
- Are less likely to be prescribed certain medications compared to White patients.
- Are more likely to have complications or advanced disease due to delays in diagnosis.
- Are more likely to report limitations in career choice because of IBD.
- Have more difficulty obtaining referrals to specialists.
- Have more worries over costs of care.

## The Crohn's & Colitis Foundation's Commitment to Diverse Communities

Inequality and racial injustice have been at the forefront of our nation and continue to lead to racial disparities in healthcare. As an organization that is focused on improving the quality of life of all IBD patients and caregivers, we recognize that diversity and inclusion are necessary to fulfill our mission. The Crohn's & Colitis Foundation is committed to advancing the efforts of diversity and inclusion within the internal and external scope of the organization. Through education, support, and advocacy, the organization is invested in ensuring diverse communities receive the latest IBD information and resources tailored to each population's need. Through research, the Foundation is dedicated to determining the role race plays in the diagnosis and treatment of IBD patients. Furthermore, the Foundation is committed to building and sustaining a workplace environment that is reflective of its diverse patient population while creating an inclusive culture.

For more information, visit: [www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org](http://www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org).

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