

Inflammatory bowel disease during childhood linked to higher cancer rates and early death

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A new study revealed an increased risk of cancer and early death in individuals who developed inflammatory bowel disease—including ulcerative colitis (UC) and Crohn's disease (CD)—during childhood.

For the *Alimentary Pharmacology & Therapeutics* study, researchers in Denmark and Finland followed 6,689 patients diagnosed with UC or CD before 18 years of age. Over a median follow-up of 9.6 years (when patients had a median age of 22.3 years), 72 patients developed cancer and 65 died. Most cancers were in the small or large intestine, but there were also cases of lymphomas and skin melanomas.

Patients diagnosed with UC during childhood had a 2.5-times higher risk of developing cancer and a 3.7-times higher risk of dying during follow-up compared with the general population. For CD, the risk was 2.6-times higher for cancer and 2.2-times higher for death compared with the general population. The main causes of death were cancer, suicide, and infections.

The findings stress the importance of cancer surveillance for [young patients](#) with UC or CD. Also, the increased risk of suicide found in the study points to the need to assess patients' mental health.

More information: Mikkel Malham et al, The incidence of cancer and mortality in paediatric onset inflammatory bowel disease in Denmark

and Finland during a 23-year period: a population-based study,
Alimentary Pharmacology & Therapeutics (2019). [DOI:](#)
[10.1111/apt.15258](https://doi.org/10.1111/apt.15258)

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