

Gay men are two times more likely to have inflammatory bowel disease, according to new research

September 15 2022



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Gay men are more than twice as likely to develop inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) than heterosexual men when both populations engage in

high-risk sexual activity, according to new research from the Digestive Health Research Institute at Case Western Reserve University and University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center (UH).

The study was published this month in the journal *Gut*.

"To our knowledge, this is the first large population-based study that demonstrates a higher prevalence of IBD in men who engage in high-risk same-sex [sexual activity](#)," said Emad Mansoor, study lead author and assistant professor at the Case Western Reserve School of Medicine and UH. "Our study is expected to open a new field of research into gastrointestinal inflammatory conditions."

"Studying the cause of IBD in this underrepresented patient population in comparison to other [patient groups](#)," said Fabio Cominelli, corresponding study author, professor at the School of Medicine and chief scientific officer at UH, "will allow us to further investigate the cause of disease development in Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis patients and develop personalized precision medicine and treatment strategies, while also reducing stigma."

The study's impact is significant, as more than 7.1% of the United States population identifies as LGBTQIA+, an increase from 5.6% in 2020, [according to Gallup](#).

The findings

The team evaluated self-reported data from patients treated at 58 health care organizations in the U.S. between 2002 and 2022.

The data showed that in patients with a diagnosis of high-risk same-sex sexual activity, 0.8% were diagnosed with Crohn's disease and 1.26% with ulcerative colitis. These findings were compared to men who

engage in high-risk heterosexual activity, of which, 0.49% had Crohn's disease and 0.52% had ulcerative colitis.

High-risk sexual activity as defined in this study includes [sexual contact](#) without barrier protection as well as having multiple sexual partners.

The team also further analyzed the data in relation to Crohn's disease and found men who engaged in high-risk same-sex sexual activity were more likely to have peri-anal disease including peri-anal abscess, rectal abscess and stricturing disease of the colon or small intestine. Among those with severe manifestations of [ulcerative colitis](#), men who engaged in high-risk same-sex sexual activity were more likely to undergo partial colectomy.

The findings will be further evaluated by the team—including investigation into the potential role of the gut microbiome—during a long-term study that allows investigators to track participants over time.

More information: Emad Mansoor et al, Epidemiology of inflammatory bowel disease in men with high-risk homosexual activity, *Gut* (2022). [DOI: 10.1136/gutjnl-2022-328218](https://doi.org/10.1136/gutjnl-2022-328218)

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

Citation: Gay men are two times more likely to have inflammatory bowel disease, according to new research (2022, September 15) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-09-gay-men-inflammatory-bowel-disease.html>

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