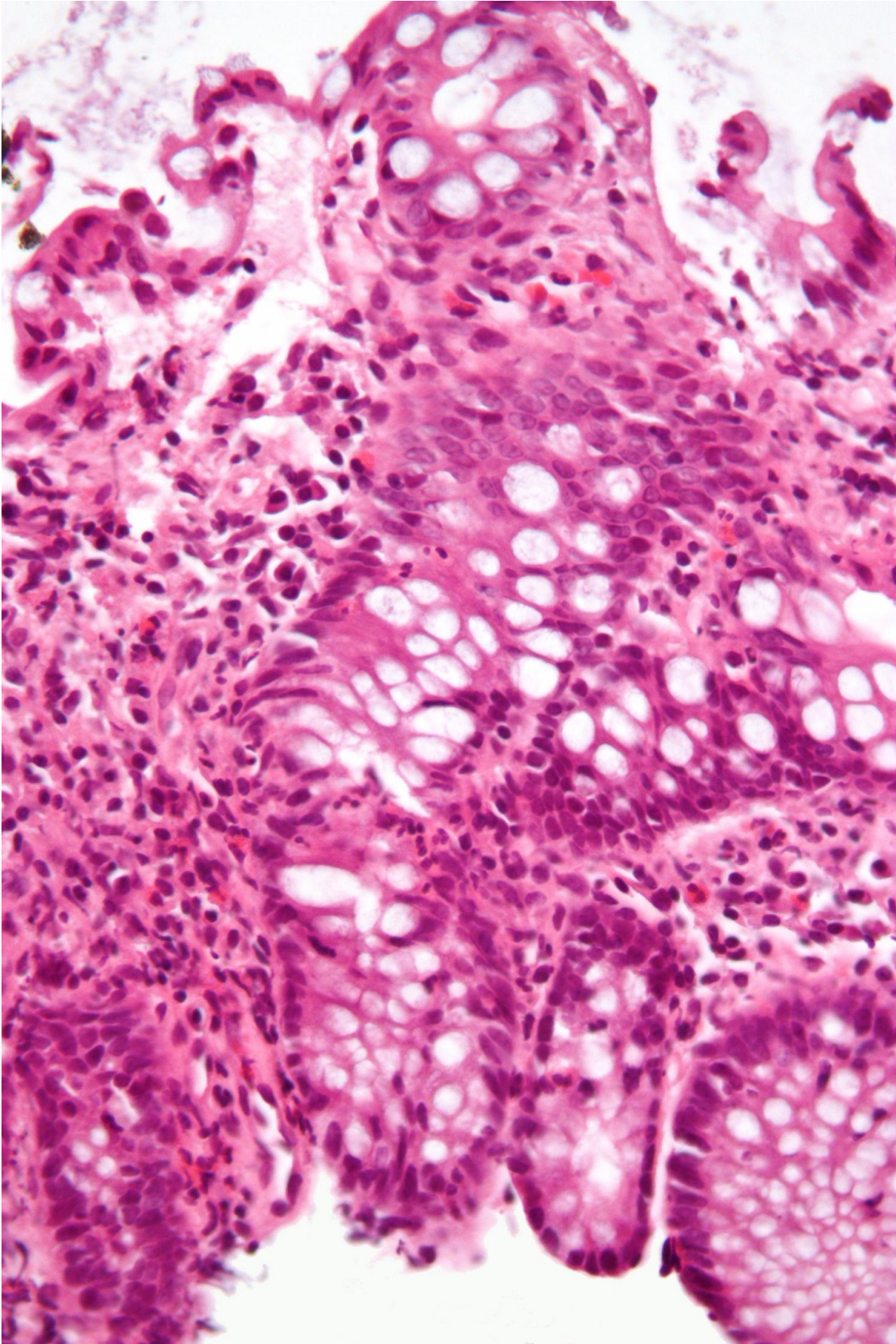


# Consumer Health: Who is at risk for inflammatory bowel disease?

December 5 2022, by Laurel Kelly

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Micrograph showing inflammation of the large bowel in a case of inflammatory bowel disease. Colonic biopsy. Credit: Wikipedia/CC BY-SA 3.0

Researchers estimate that more than half a million people in the U.S. have Crohn's disease, and 600,000 to 900,000 people in the U.S. have ulcerative colitis, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

Inflammatory bowel disease is an umbrella term used to describe disorders that involve chronic inflammation of your digestive tract. For some people, [inflammatory bowel disease](#) is only a mild illness. For others, it can be debilitating and sometimes leads to life-threatening complications. Crohn's disease and [ulcerative colitis](#) are two types of inflammatory bowel disease.

Crohn's disease is characterized by inflammation of the lining of your digestive tract, which often spreads deep into affected tissues. Ulcerative colitis causes long-lasting inflammation and sores in the innermost lining of your large intestine and rectum.

Both Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis usually cause diarrhea, rectal bleeding, abdominal pain, fatigue and weight loss. The symptoms of Crohn's disease and colitis don't just affect you physically, though. They take an emotional toll, as well.

## **Risk factors for inflammatory bowel disease**

- Age: Most people who develop inflammatory bowel disease are diagnosed before they're 30. But some people don't develop the

disease until their 50s or 60s.

- **Race or ethnicity:** Although inflammatory bowel disease is more common in white people, it can occur in any race. Cases are increasing in other races and ethnicities.
- **Family history:** You're at higher risk if you have a close relative—such as a parent, sibling or child—with the disease.
- **Cigarette smoking:** Cigarette smoking is the most important controllable risk factor for developing Crohn's disease. Smoking may help prevent ulcerative colitis. However, its harm to overall health outweighs any benefit, and quitting smoking can improve the general health of your digestive tract, as well as provide many other [health benefits](#).
- **Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications:** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications may increase the risk of developing inflammatory bowel disease or worsen the disease in people who have inflammatory bowel disease. These include ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others), naproxen sodium (Aleve), diclofenac sodium and others.

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