

What Can You Eat With Crohn's Disease?

A Complete Food List



BY
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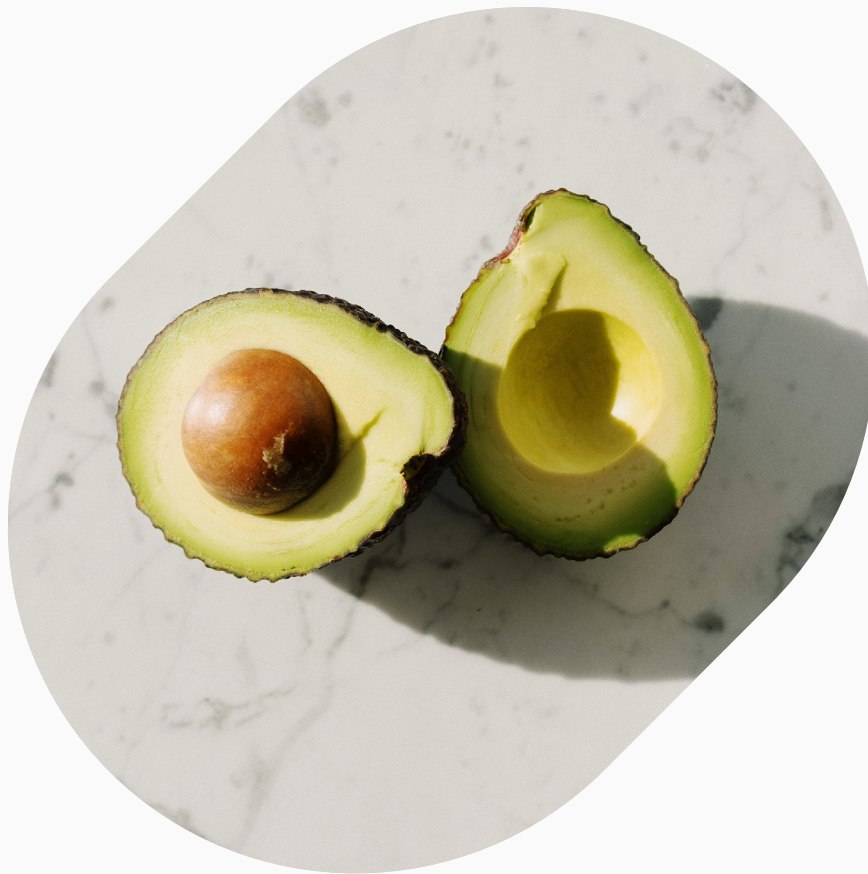
Crohn's disease is a type of inflammatory bowel disease that is characterized by inflammation anywhere along the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. What causes Crohn's isn't entirely understood, but genes, environment, and autoimmunity all seem to factor in. Crohn's may be managed — but not cured — with a healthy diet plan and lifestyle approaches.

This guide will highlight foods to avoid and foods to include in your diet that may help you control inflammation, reduce flares, and manage your disease!



Food as Medicine

The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates is credited with the famous quote, “Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.” Though there is no historical evidence to support that Hippocrates actually said this, the quote has been important in highlighting the role of diet in disease prevention, treatment, and management. A nutritionally sound diet may provide therapeutic benefits in managing chronic conditions such as Crohn’s disease. Though diet is not a cure, it may increase the efficacy of medicinal treatments when used in collaboration with them. ([Source](#))



What Causes Crohn's Flares?

Inflammatory bowel disease may flare up during times of high stress, when you use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or take antibiotics that alter gut bacteria, if you don't take your medications as prescribed, and last but not least, when you eat foods that irritate your digestive system. Certain foods may aggravate the gastrointestinal tract, making symptoms such as chronic diarrhea worse, especially during a flare. Learning how proper nutrition affects you will help you manage your disease better. ([Source](#))



8 Foods to *Avoid* With Crohn's



Reducing severity and occurrence of Crohn's flares through dietary intervention may help you manage and reduce disease symptoms. Managing and improving your symptoms may mean avoiding trigger foods that may increase GI inflammation. A standard Western diet tends to be high in refined sugars and processed foods and, unfortunately, low in fruits and vegetables.

This lack of fresh food along with reduced fiber intake can have a negative effect on the digestive system. Consuming the typical Western diet is not feasible for maintaining a healthy microbiome and may contribute to the development of inflammatory bowel disease. The following are some foods you might want to avoid with Crohn's disease. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

Note this list is fairly extensive and includes some foods that, while they may exacerbate Crohn's symptoms, also provide health benefits. Be sure to work with your health care provider or [WellTheory Care Team](#) to ensure your diet is nutritionally sound and supportive of your autoimmune condition.

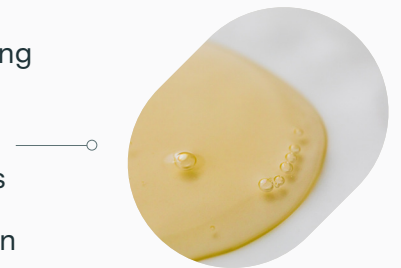
01 Refined Sugar

Refined sugar is found in most packaged and processed foods as well as in sweet beverages, such as sodas, that are carbonated or fizzy. A high sugar intake has been linked to increased risk of developing Crohn's disease. ([Source](#))



02 Dietary Fats and Oils

A Western diet is typically high in fats that may increase the risk of triggering or flaring inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's. Avoiding fast, fatty foods and fried, greasy foods is advised. Polyunsaturated fats are high in omega-6 fatty acids that may increase inflammation. Seed oils such as safflower, sunflower, soybean, corn, and cottonseed oil are high in omega-6 fatty acids. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))



03 Caffeine

Caffeine may benefit some by promoting a daily bowel movement, but for those with Crohn's, it has the ability to exacerbate diarrhea. Caffeine may cause reflux and reduce your appetite, contributing to malnutrition if you are already dealing with absorption issues. Caffeine may increase the risk of insomnia as well as increase the level of stress hormones. Besides coffee, chocolate and some kinds of tea contain caffeine and it may be beneficial to avoid them or reduce consumption. ([Source](#))



04 Alcohol

Alcohol can be irritating and inflammatory to anyone's intestines, but if you're living with Crohn's disease it can be extremely aggravating and tends to exacerbate symptoms and inflammation. ([Source](#))



05 Gluten and Grains

Consumption of gluten and grains may increase the risk of gut dysbiosis, leading to malabsorption and gut permeability. Limiting your intake or eliminating this category of foods altogether may improve intestinal inflammation and absorption. Following a gluten free diet is possible by avoiding gluten-containing grains such as wheat and rye, among others. ([Source](#))



06 Gas-Producing Foods

Consuming gassy foods that are difficult to digest due to a high fiber content may increase Crohn's symptoms. Foods it may be best to avoid include beans and legumes, as well as cruciferous vegetables such as Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage. ([Source](#))



07 Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds can be difficult to digest in general, but for those with impaired digestion it may be extra difficult. Nuts and seeds that are in their whole form may irritate the GI tract, but you might be able to tolerate smooth nut and seed butters, which are gentler on the gut. ([Source](#))



08 Spicy Foods

Spicy foods and seasonings have the ability to irritate even healthy intestines, but if yours are already inflamed, avoiding them may be wise. Spicy food triggers that may promote cramps and diarrhea include hot sauces or fiery spices such as chili powder or cayenne pepper. Specific diet strategies, such as the autoimmune protocol (AIP) diet, eliminate hot spices that promote inflammation. ([Source](#))



What *Can* You Eat With Crohn's Disease?



Research has shown that the nutrients from food included in a healthy diet play a role in managing Crohn's disease flare-ups and chronic inflammation. Not only are there many foods to avoid with Crohn's, but there are also foods to include that can reduce inflammation and improve symptoms.

The gut microbiome is a key factor in the development and management of inflammatory intestinal disorders, and diet is directly linked to our internal environment. There are many specialized whole foods diets to manage Crohn's symptoms, such as the Crohn's Disease Exclusion Diet, the [low FODMAP diet](#), and the [AIP diet](#) just to name a few. Read on to find out what nutrient-dense foods you can include in your diet to help manage your Crohn's disease. ([Source](#), [Source](#))

01 Fermented Foods

Fermented foods such as kimchi, miso, and fermented pickled vegetables contain probiotics that are beneficial to building and maintaining a diverse gut microbiome for optimal health. Research has shown that traditional Japanese foods such as these may improve gut bacteria and support digestion, helping reduce symptoms of Crohn's disease. ([Source](#))



02 Bone Broth

Bone broth is a nutrient dense food full of minerals, amino acids, and collagen, all of which are essential to good gut health. Research has shown that nutrient deficiencies may be a risk factor for the development of gastrointestinal symptoms. Filling in the gaps of nutritional and mineral deficiencies by including foods like bone broth could be a great tool to manage your disease as research shows it can improve symptoms and inflammation in ulcerative colitis, another form of irritable bowel disease. ([Source](#))



03 Fruits and Vegetables

Including as much plant diversity as possible in your diet (while avoiding the gas inducing vegetables above) is key to getting your essential nutrients. Raw vegetables may upset the GI tract, so consuming cooked vegetables could be your best bet. Removing skin and seeds of fruits may help alleviate aggravation of the gut lining and ease digestion as well. According to the AIP diet all fruits are acceptable to eat, as well as all vegetables (with the exception of corn and those classified as nightshades).

Suggestions for which fruits and vegetables to consume will vary depending on the diet you follow to manage symptoms or flares, and



03 Fruits and Vegetables Continued

whether it is a low fiber or low fat diet. Your body may respond well to some fruits and vegetables and not to others, so taking a personalized approach to managing your symptoms is key. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))



04 Protein Rich Foods

Red meat has been shown to increase the risk of relapse in some with inflammatory bowel disease, though consuming lean meats such as chicken, turkey, and fish have not been proven to increase the risk of developing or flaring disease symptoms. Though some healing diets such as the AIP diet do include red meat, that doesn't necessarily mean you should either include it or cut it out — listen to your body and the recommendations of your Care Team to know what protein sources are best for you.



Please note: if you have Crohn's you have a higher need for protein intake due to excess inflammation. Protein rich foods such high quality meat, fish, and eggs may help your body to heal more effectively. Personalizing your approach by writing in a food journal to keep track of what foods bother you and what foods help is important to learning how to manage your Crohn's disease best. ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#))

05 Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids are good for reducing inflammation and include walnuts, fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, and sardines, as well as olive and flaxseed oils. Including omega-3 fats in a balanced diet may reduce the risk of a Crohn's flare-up. ([Source](#))



5 Crohn's Friendly Recipes to Try at Home



Recipes for delicious Crohn's friendly meals and snacks abound, making it easy to enjoy a wide variety of foods while reducing flares and symptoms. Here are a few to get you started:

1. [One Skillet Spinach Artichoke Chicken](#)
2. [Sweet Potato and Wild Salmon Hash](#)
3. [Lamb Meatballs with Garlic and Spinach](#)
4. [Coconut Chia Pudding With Cantaloupe](#)
5. [Strawberry Banana Popsicle](#)

The Bottom Line on What You Can Eat With Crohn's Disease



If you are just beginning your journey with Crohn's disease or learning how to reduce flares and extensive inflammation, you may have noticed how much influence diet can have on your quality of life. The key to managing symptoms effectively is to reduce inflammation in the intestines, thereby reducing or eliminating cramping, bloating, and diarrhea. Altering your diet and eliminating inflammatory foods that may trigger symptoms while bringing in healing, nutrient dense foods is a good place to start.

We've included a complete list of foods to add and avoid below. Feel free to bring it with you on your next grocery shopping trip or use it the next time you clean out your pantry!

For more information on how to live well with Crohn's disease check out WellTheory's [Ultimate Guide to Crohn's Disease](#) for more lifestyle tips and suggestions.

A Complete List of Foods to Add and Avoid With Crohn's

Foods to Add

Fruits

- Dependent on your personal triggers

Vegetables

- Dependent on your personal triggers

Bone broth

- If not making your own, consider [Bona Fide Provisions](#), [Bare Bones](#), or [Kettle & Fire](#)

Fermented foods

- Kimchi
- Miso
- Pickled vegetables
- Kombucha

Protein rich foods

- High quality meat
- Fish
- Eggs

Omega-3 rich foods

- Flaxseed oil
- Olive oil
- Fatty fish

Foods to Avoid

Refined sugar

- Processed foods
- Sugary drinks

Inflammatory fats & oils

- Safflower oil
- Sunflower oil
- Corn oil
- Soybean oil
- Cottonseed oil

Caffeine

Alcohol

Gluten

Grains

Gas producing foods

- Beans
- Legumes
- Cruciferous vegetables

Nuts & seeds

- Dependent on your personal triggers — you may be able to tolerate nut butters & seed butters

Spicy foods

- Dependent on your personal triggers — you may want to avoid chili powder & cayenne pepper



A Complete List of Foods to Add and Avoid With Crohn's

Foods to Add

Foods to Avoid

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