

What is Inflammatory Bowel Disease?

Recorded: February 9, 2024

Transcript

[0:00 Introduction]

Dr. Neeraj Narula: Here's what you need to know about inflammatory bowel disease. I'm Dr. Neeraj Narula an associate professor of medicine at McMaster University, and director of the IBD Clinic at Hamilton Health Sciences in Ontario, Canada.

[0:14 What is inflammatory bowel disease?]

Dr. Neeraj Narula: Inflammatory bowel disease, or IBD, is a chronic condition where there is evidence of inflammation occurring within the bowels. It is commonly confused with IBS or irritable bowel syndrome, but these are very different diseases. There are conventionally two types of IBD, including Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

The classic descriptions are that ulcerative colitis is inflammation of just the very inner lining of the colon, whereas Crohn's disease can lead to full thickness inflammation of the bowel wall anywhere in the gut, from mouth to the anus. There is no known cure for IBD, and part of this is due to the cause of IBD being uncertain. There are, however, many hypotheses which have been proposed.

[0:50 What might cause inflammatory bowel disease?]

Dr. Neeraj Narula: What we do know is that the body's immune system is responding to something inside the bowels and that leads to inflammation occurring here. We have seen higher rates of IBD in industrialized nations, which has led to theories that Westernization may somehow be implicated. We recently published a paper in the British Medical Journal in 2021 which linked high consumption of ultra-processed foods to development of IBD. Specifically, we found that people who had five or more servings of ultra-processed food in a day were almost five times more likely to develop Crohn's disease compared to those who had less than one serving per day. What we are trying to learn now is whether removing these foods from the diet. Once you have IBD will lead to improvement in inflammation of the bowels. Hopefully we'll have more answers on this in the next couple of years.

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