

ETERNAL HEALTH

CONDITION OF THE WEEK

Crohn's Disease

Crohn's disease is an inflammatory bowel condition, the cause of which has yet to be determined. It is thought to be related to an immune system that has both become over-heated and compromised, in an attempt to deal with the presence of abnormal germs in the bowel, hence the presence of inflammation.

Medical treatment essentially aims at hosing down the immune system with pretty powerful pharmaceuticals, which can be effective, but theoretically also increase vulnerability to cancer and infections. Mercifully an analysis has demonstrated that those who receive one of the newer drugs for Crohn's disease, designed to suppress the immune system and reduce inflammation, known as a tumour necrosis factor alpha blocker, don't suffer from an increased risk of developing cancers or infections. In addition to the pharmaceuticals research shows that a number of natural treatments can be helpful.

A probiotic containing potentially beneficial bowel bacteria called VSL3 has been shown to reduce inflammation and improve symptoms.

An allergy test measuring what is known as an immune substance called IgG shows that Crohn's sufferers have heightened reactions to yeast and processed cheese, with avoidance of these leading to improvements.

Optimising vitamin A and D status might benefit Crohn's disease.

Prebiotics containing nutrients like inulin and resistant starch, which travel through the gut undigested and increase the presence of beneficial substances, that protect and nourish the lining of the bowel, might be helpful.

Despite the fact that research on fish oil and omega-3 fatty acids is conflicted, some trials showing benefits and others not, one trial has shown that combining fish oil with prebiotics and an antioxidant supplement, which included vitamins, A, B and E, helped Crohn's sufferers to lose weight and it provided them with a better quality of life while reducing the intensity of their disease.