

# DIAGNOSTIC TESTING for CROHN'S DISEASE

Unlike many diseases there is not one gold standard test to make a diagnosis of Crohn's Disease. Rather, your physician relies on your history, physical examination and additional diagnostic tests which may include:

1. Upper Endoscopy
2. Colonoscopy
3. Imaging of the small bowel through
  - MR enterography
  - CT enterography
  - Barium small bowel x-ray
  - Capsule endoscopy
4. Histopathology (biopsy or surgical tissue examination)
5. Blood testing

The evaluation of these tests (alone or in combination, along with biopsy confirmation) by your physician, may lead to a diagnosis of Crohn's Disease. However, gastrointestinal symptoms should be reevaluated over time, especially if you don't respond to what should be appropriate therapy, because some things may look like Crohn's Disease initially but prove to be something else.

Most experts would agree that a biopsy is essential for diagnosis and that reevaluation is appropriate if you do not respond to what should be appropriate therapy. With double balloon technology, doctors can reach parts of the small bowel they could not before so a biopsy is indeed obtainable in nearly every patient.

It is important to remember that the presence of some white blood cells (immune cells) in the colon is NORMAL and it is only when they are increased, ulcers are present, etc. that IBD is diagnosed. Blood tests alone cannot diagnose Crohn's Disease but can be used as supplementary information to help confirm a diagnosis and possibly to help determine the likely future disease course and prognosis.

Authors:

Barrett Levesque, MD • Marci Reiss, LCSW • William Sandborn, MD