5.4 Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) refers to a number of inflammatory conditions in the intestine. The two most common are Crohn's Disease and ulcerative colitis. These two conditions differ mainly in the areas of the intestine that are affected. Crohn's disease can occur anywhere throughout the GI tract, but most commonly occurs in the last part of the ileum. Crohn's disease may also involve all layers of the intestine. Ulcerative colitis are ulcers, or sores, in the lining of the colon and/or rectum. It is estimated that up to 1 million people have IBD in the United States. Half of these individuals have Crohn's disease, and the other half have ulcerative colitis.

The figures below show the inflammation and swelling that occurs in individuals with Crohn's disease.

![Figure 5.41 Inflamed ileum](image1)

![Figure 5.42 Swollen ileum](image2)

The exact causes of these two diseases is not known. One hypothesized cause for Crohn's disease is an overactive immune system that results in the chronic inflammation and collateral damage to the cells of the intestine, resulting in formation of lesions.

Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis present symptoms similar to other gastrointestinal diseases, such as irritable bowel syndrome and GERD. The Inflammatory Bowel Syndrome Self Help and Support Group link below has a nice table that illustrates the overlapping of symptoms, but should not be used as a definitive way to diagnose someone with one of these conditions.
Web Link

Gastrointestinal Diseases: Similar yet Different Symptoms

References & Links
3. http://www.ccfa.org/info/about/crohns