



IBD treatment: a practical guide

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How we check whether treatment is working

Some treatment settles a flare; regular maintenance treatment helps prevent another one. Feeling better does not always mean the inflammation has healed. I use your symptoms, blood tests, calprotectin and, when needed, endoscopy or scans to check your response.

Treatment depends on the type of IBD

Mesalazine is mainly a UC treatment, given orally, rectally or both. Suppositories and enemas reach different areas. It is not a reliable general Crohn's treatment. Other immune-targeting medicines are selected for your circumstances.

Use steroids safely

Steroids are short-term flare treatment, not maintenance. Follow the prescribed course and any reduction plan. Do not stop suddenly, double doses or restart leftover tablets without advice. Repeated courses require review of the longer-term treatment.

Keep your blood tests and vaccinations up to date

Certain treatments need infection screening, vaccination review and ongoing blood tests. Ask before live vaccines or travel. Tell other prescribers about all medicines. Report fever, possible infection or side effects and ask about a scheduled dose. Agree who reviews results and whom to call between appointments.

Tell me if treatment is difficult to manage

Continue maintenance treatment as prescribed. Discuss missed doses, cost, injection difficulties and pregnancy or breastfeeding plans before stopping. Many treatments can continue, but others need change. Nutrition supports recovery and is not a universal cure.

Recognise urgent symptoms

Increasing blood or diarrhoea needs advice. Severe pain, swelling, repeated vomiting, dehydration, heavy bleeding or frequent bloody diarrhoea with fever needs urgent assessment. Do not self-treat a severe flare with loperamide. Call 111 for collapse or unsafe travel.

Call 111 for collapse, severe breathing difficulty, a severe allergic reaction, or if you are too unwell to travel safely. Do not wait for an email reply.





What are we aiming for with treatment?

Symptoms and inflammation

Feel better and function better

Less bleeding, urgency, diarrhoea or pain.

Eating, sleeping and everyday life improve.

Check that inflammation is controlled

Blood and stool tests add information.

Endoscopy or imaging may also be needed.

Symptoms and inflammation do not always change together.

I check both before changing the treatment plan.

Feeling better is important. I also check whether inflammation is controlled, because the two do not always match. Conversely, ongoing symptoms do not always arise from inflammation, and an alternative approach may be better than escalating treatment aimed at inflammation.

Read this illustration alongside the advice in this guide.

