

# I Had Crohn's Disease

I first had symptoms of Crohn's Disease when I was twelve years old. I know that now. At the time, the doctors just said it was a growing process. When I was in my late teens the doctors told me that after I had children my system would straighten out. It was not until my twenties that I consulted other medical doctors and they discovered that I had had Crohn's disease all those years.

In the following paragraphs I will give you my understanding and perception of Crohn's disease. I am not a medical doctor or medically trained in any way, so what you will be reading is a combination of my personal ex-

perience coupled with the research I was able to do on my own.

Crohn's disease deteriorates the intestines. Because the intestines absorb all the vitamins and minerals that you need to survive in life, other things happen. You become malnourished. Your muscles deteriorate. You get muscle spasms. Crohn's disease can manifest in your ears, your eyes, your nose, your mouth... It can manifest as sores. I used to have sores in my mouth. They would bleed and I would constantly clean my mouth with peroxide. You can't swallow that without deadly effects, but I used to swish that around in my mouth all the time because it would ease the pain of the sores in my mouth.

It corrupts and destroys the functions of the intestine and eventually disables a person's daily routine. The intestines play a major role in providing the body with vitamins and minerals. They are the final stage of digestion. A non-functioning intestine causes problems with the nervous system, weight maintenance and muscle control.

This disease causes lesions in the intestinal tract creating sores and scar tissue. Eventually the intestinal tract becomes so scarred that blockage occurs. Because of the blockage there is no way for waste to complete its journey. Surgery must be performed to remove the blockage. If this does not occur the intestines will rupture and poison the entire system.

Having to constantly fight uncontrollable dysentery, spontaneous attacks of pain and low-grade fevers eventually wears down one's immune system. As we all

know, when low-grade fever is present and the immune system is worn down the body is susceptible to all kinds of disease.

Typical treatment for Crohn's disease consists of high doses of antibiotics and very dangerous amounts of steroids for long periods of times.

When a person has so much pain and dysentery it becomes easier not to eat. The less you eat the less work your intestines have to do. But, we have to eat to get the necessary vitamins and minerals. Hospitalization is sometimes necessary after long periods of pain and not eating.

Medication and food are both given intravenously for several days in hopes that the intestines will rest long enough to create enough scar tissue so they can function again. A more serious procedure is to remove the diseased area. This a temporary fix. They have found that after removal of the diseased area, the disease tends to reproduce itself elsewhere in the body. I did not allow them to remove any part of my intestines, although it was suggested more than once.

I went from doctor to doctor, trying technique after technique to deal with the problem.

When Dick and I met, he knew I was sick. I was going through bouts of diarrhea, fevers and aching from head to toe.

My father and I used to joke with each other saying things like "you don't know how sick I am." He had a