



# Eosinophilic Colitis (EC)

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Eosinophilic gastrointestinal disorders (EGIDs) are rare conditions that affect the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. EGIDs can occur in infants, children, and adults. They are often identified by irregular food-related reactions. This occurs with a high number of eosinophils in the GI tract. Eosinophils are white blood cells linked with allergic-type reactions. Their exact role is not known, but they are part of the body's immune response. These cells release toxins that are harmful to the body. Inflammation occurs when these are active, which causes redness and swelling. Immune response is the body's ability to recognize foreign objects that might be harmful, such as bacteria and viruses. The body then destroys them by using specialized cells, eosinophils. EGIDs can occur in any area of the GI tract and are named to match the organs affected. People with EGID's may have more than one of these disorders.

## Eosinophilic Colitis (EC)

EC occurs when eosinophils gather in the large intestine (colon). This then causes redness, swelling, and damage in the intestines.

### Symptoms

Infants with EC may have bloody diarrhea. In some cases, this can lead to weight loss, difficulty feeding, and not taking in enough nutrients. Symptoms may be worsened by proteins in cow's milk.

Both children and adults may experience the following symptoms:

- Bloody diarrhea – passing of loose stools that contain blood, blood may be bright red to dark black in color
- Anemia – low blood counts
- Nausea – a feeling of sickness with an urge to vomit
- Vomiting – bringing food back up from the stomach
- Difficulty feeding and/or gaining weight
- Poor growth and weight loss
- Malnutrition – not taking in enough nutrients
- Abdominal pain – dull to sharp pain that occurs inside the belly, commonly in the stomach or intestines
- Fatigue – feeling low energy, overly tired

### Diagnosis

EC is most common in infants under 6 months of age. However, children and adults may develop this

condition. The diagnosis is confirmed by a colonoscopy. During this test, a biopsy is taken from the large intestine. A high number of eosinophils suggests EC. High levels of eosinophil can also be seen in other conditions such as celiac disease and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). It is important that people discuss all symptoms and concerns with their healthcare provider. A full medical history helps to properly rule out other conditions.

### Treatment

Treatment of EC is based on each person's symptom severity. The goal is to reduce damage, redness, and swelling in the large intestine. Symptom severity and other medical conditions will be considered to find the best treatment option.

- Like other EGIDs, dietary restrictions may be used to treat EC. Infants often show EC as an allergic response to cow milk protein. Unlike other EGIDs, EC is the least likely to be caused by an allergic response in adults. Food allergy testing may still be used to see if foods are causing the increase in eosinophils. The results of this test are then used to develop restriction diets. This type of diet is used to find and

eliminate foods that cause symptoms.

- Drugs may be used to treat EC. Systemic corticosteroids (see table) or other anti-inflammatory drugs to reduce pain, swelling, and redness (such as ibuprofen or naproxen sodium) may be prescribed.

## Conclusion

For all people diagnosed with EGIDs, a treatment plan designed for each person is ideal. Biopsies will be done throughout treatment to manage the disease and check if treatment is effective. It is important to discuss all symptoms with a healthcare provider. A full medical history helps provide an accurate diagnosis. Successful treatment can only happen after a proper diagnosis. Early diagnosis is important to ensure the best symptom relief and overall health. Building a healthcare team will ensure the best care and disease management. This team may include a gastroenterologist, allergist, pathologist, dietitian, and any other relevant healthcare provider.

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