

IBD & pregnancy

Your pregnancy with mild to severe IBD

MyIBDLife
Parenthood Project

Understanding the severity of your IBD can help guide your pregnancy journey

About **1.6 million people in the U.S.** have inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), which can be categorized as mild, moderate or severe. Understanding the severity of your IBD can help you make better choices before, during and after pregnancy, and it can help keep symptoms under control and lower the risk of complications.



Because there is no formal system for classifying the severity of this condition, your health care team will evaluate your IBD based on three key factors:



Impact on your life:

Do symptoms or physical impact of IBD limit your ability to take on daily tasks?



Disease burden:

Lab and imaging tests can show how much inflammation or swelling you are experiencing in the gastrointestinal tract.



Disease course:

Has IBD caused any damage to tissue or required surgery? How often do you have flares and other related symptoms?¹



“Many patients that have been diagnosed with IBD may be scared to bring pregnancy up to their gastroenterologist because they fear being told they can’t get pregnant. The good news is it’s possible and with the right plan most people can have a healthy pregnancy.”

Dr. Christopher Robison, Maternal-Fetal Medicine specialist

Whether you have mild, moderate or severe IBD, you can have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby by working closely with your health care team. Here are some important things to keep in mind while navigating your pregnancy journey.

Mild IBD

For some patients, IBD produces mild symptoms, causing little fatigue or disability. Tests detect modest levels of inflammation in the lining of the gastrointestinal tract.¹

Planning

- If you have mild IBD, you're likely to have a normal and uncomplicated pregnancy.
- If your symptoms are under control when you become pregnant, you're likely to remain in remission throughout your pregnancy.³

Pregnancy

- To help ensure that you have a healthy pregnancy, follow your treatment plan to keep your IBD in remission. Take all medications as prescribed and report any symptoms to your health care team.³

Moderate to severe IBD

Severe IBD causes symptoms that affect your quality of life, which can include fatigue. Tests may indicate that your intestines have extensive and/or deep lesions. Moderate IBD is harder to define but causes symptoms that fall between mild and severe.¹

Planning

- Before you try to become pregnant, doctors strongly recommend waiting until you have been in remission for 3 to 6 months. This will help lower the risk of IBD flares during pregnancy and in the postpartum (following birth) period. If you become pregnant while your IBD is causing symptoms, it's likely to stay active or even get worse, which can lead to pregnancy complications.³
- Your health care team may recommend monitoring your baby's growth with ultrasound imaging every 4 weeks after 18 to 20 weeks of pregnancy, especially if you take steroids or have moderate to severe IBD flares during pregnancy.⁴

Pregnancy

- Research suggests that women who have active IBD symptoms when they become pregnant have a significantly increased risk for continuing to have active IBD during pregnancy, which is linked to a higher risk of premature birth.²
- If you experience a flare during pregnancy, it's important to work with your health care team to get it under control with effective treatment. In most cases, the best strategy for managing an IBD flare during pregnancy will be the same approach that would be recommended to control a flare if you were not pregnant.²

Additional resources, helpful tips and tools, and more for you and your patient can be found on ibdparenthoodproject.org

REFERENCES

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