

YOUR Crohn's flare-prevention PLAN!

If you have Crohn's, you may be worried your life will be defined by remissions and flares—times when you'll feel like you can take on the world, and

times when even mundane tasks seem daunting. "Yet the fact is, a remission can last indefinitely," says Nirmal Kaur, MD, medical director of the inflammatory bowel disease program at the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

"The secret is to stick to your medical regimen, keep in touch with your doctor and learn which preventive strategies work for you."

Confide in your friends

Studies suggest having social support can cut your flare-ups by 50% or more. "I found it incredibly freeing when I opened up to friends," says Crohn's patient Frank Sileo, PhD, author of *Toilet Paper Flowers*. "Now I don't feel self-conscious anymore."

SUCCESS TIP: If you'd feel more comfortable con-

finding in people who are going through the same struggles as you, you can find a nearby support group by doing a search on the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America's website, ccfa.org/chapters.

Quit the worst vice



If you smoke, it's imperative that you quit. A study published in *Inflammatory Bowel Diseases* confirms that cigarette smoke worsens this disease, triggering more frequent, more severe flares. "I quit four years ago, and it was the best thing I could have done," says Sileo.

SUCCESS TIP: Log on to cancer.org for the free

You're not alone!

Nearly half a million people in the U.S. have Crohn's disease, the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation says.

pamphlet, *Guide to Quitting Smoking*.

Choosing a strategy that fits your lifestyle can double your odds of success.

Go semi-vegetarian

You don't have to give up meat, poultry and processed foods entirely. But cutting back—so fruits, vegetables, fish, rice, oats and other healthy fare make up a bigger proportion of your diet—could be the ticket to minimizing your flares. According to a study in the *World Journal of Gastroenterology*, 94% of patients were able to avoid having relapses this way.



SUCCESS TIP: Add turmeric and ginger to your meals. For many Crohn's patients, these spices help dampen inflammation in the digestive tract.

Keep a symptom diary

Foods that work wonders for one person can make another one miserable! Yet 64% of Crohn's patients can stay in remission simply by avoiding trigger foods. Keeping a careful record of everything you eat (and how your body responds) can help you suss out the foods that you're smart to avoid.

SUCCESS TIP: Record everything you eat in one column, and track symptoms in another. "There can be a day's delay between eating a food and developing symptoms," notes Dr. Kaur. "So try eating the same basic meals for two weeks, so patterns will be clear." 📖

—Brenda Kearns

