

A Gut Reaction

Finding treatments to help people with inflammatory bowel disease

Gabriella Taylor, a 27-year-old financial planner, looks like the picture of perfect health. But since she was a teenager, this Aberdeen resident has been suffering with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), a condition that takes a physical and emotional toll on an estimated one million Americans.

IBD encompasses two chronic diseases that cause inflammation of the intestines: ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. In ulcerative colitis, the inner lining of the colon becomes inflamed

as having irritable bowel syndrome. That's why it's important to have a medical expert on your side. Proper diagnosis is the key to proper treatment and the most effective relief of symptoms.

Dr. Mark Worthington, a gastroenterologist at Johns Hopkins Bayview, specializes in IBD and sees every type of patient—from mild cases to the most severe. "My patients often have very troubling abdominal pain and go to the bathroom up to 20 times a day," he says. "Many go from being perfectly healthy to a complete change in lifestyle because of these conditions. Treatment can give them their life back, like in the case of Gabriella Taylor."

When Taylor was only 15 years old, she noticed blood in her stool. After a visit to her doctor and a series of tests, she was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis. Taylor was initially treated with medication and later had three surgeries. "It was rough when I was a teenager," she confides. "I had an ostomy bag when I was a sophomore in high school. No one knew, but it felt like everyone did. I was very self-conscious, but after my third surgery, I was fine for quite a while."

Then, just three years ago, Taylor experienced an anal fistula, an abnormal connection or passageway in the intestines. She had three more surgeries, but the condition continued to reoccur. That's when her doctor referred her to Dr. Worthington. Following her consultation, she found out she actually had Crohn's disease. Taylor was treated with a blood transfusion and now is on medical therapy.

"I never realized how tired I was," she says. "I work 60 hours a week. Before my treatment, I would come home and be fatigued. Now I feel energized and feel like doing things instead of just going to bed."

"The ultimate goal is to help patients manage their symptoms medically and avoid surgery, if

possible," says Dr. Worthington. "We bring the latest treatments to those who need them, such as medications that help to halt the disease process. We also offer non-invasive procedures, such as balloon dilation, that show great promise for narrowed areas. If it looks like surgery is needed, we have wonderful surgeons right here at the Medical Center."

A Gut Feeling

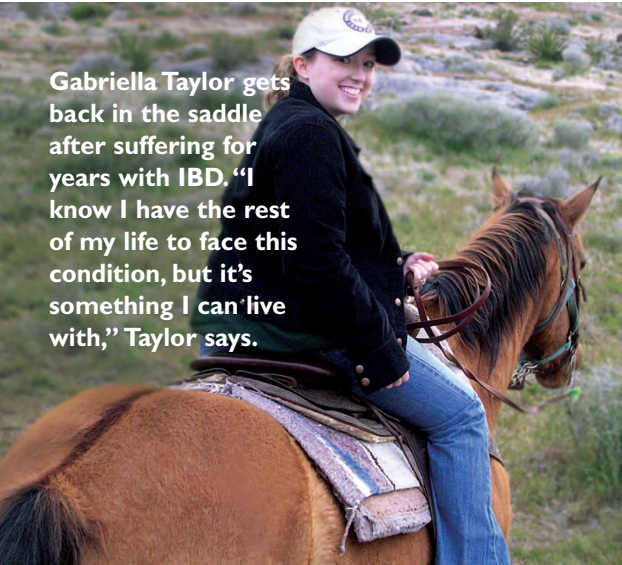
Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) affects people at all stages of life. How do you know if you have it? IBD is most commonly seen in patients ages 15 to 30, but doctors now are diagnosing an increased number of cases among those in their 50s and 60s. Symptoms of IBD include:

- diarrhea
- constipation
- weight loss
- fatigue
- abdominal pain
- blood in the stool
- fever

Care also is convenient and accessible. Johns Hopkins gastroenterologists see patients at several locations, including the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center and Johns Hopkins at White Marsh. Treatment is streamlined so patients can see a doctor for an appointment and get an endoscopy at the same place.

"I know I have the rest of my life to face this condition, but it's something I can live with," Taylor says. "I know I have to be cautious to prevent flare-ups. This means eating properly, taking my vitamins and medication and keeping my stress level down. I feel fortunate to be in the care of my team at Johns Hopkins Bayview. They've been nothing but wonderful. I'm the only one who knows my body and how I feel, and they respect all of my concerns. I've been very impressed."

—Kim Goad



Gabriella Taylor gets back in the saddle after suffering for years with IBD. "I know I have the rest of my life to face this condition, but it's something I can live with," Taylor says.

and develops ulcers, or sores. Crohn's disease can cause inflammation in any part of the digestive tract from the mouth to the anus, but is most commonly found in the small intestine and colon. This inflammation typically extends deep into the bowel wall. Both conditions result in a variety of uncomfortable symptoms, including abdominal pain and frequent diarrhea.

IBD can be difficult to diagnose because there may be no symptoms, even if a patient's bowel has been damaged for years. And when symptoms do appear, they often are similar to those of other conditions. In fact, many patients are misdiagnosed

To schedule an appointment with a Johns Hopkins Bayview gastroenterologist, call 410-550-0790.