

Crohn's Disease

Definition

A chronic inflammatory disease that can affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract but most commonly affects the ileum.

Causes, Incidence, and Risk Factors

- The cause is unknown, but genetic factors seem to play a role.
- Chronic ulcerative colitis occurs in the same families.
- Can occur any where in GIT.
- Classically affects the illium.

- The intestinal wall becomes thick, and deep ulcers may form.
- The disease may occur at any age, but adolescence and early adulthood are the prevalent age groups.
- Risk factors are family history of Crohn's disease or Jewish ancestry.
- The incidence is 7 out of 10,000 people.

Symptoms

- abdominal pain
- fever
- diarrhoea
- loss of appetite
- weight loss
- abdominal mass
- Borborygmus (**bor-bo-rig-mus**)
- clubbing of the fingers or toes
- gastrointestinal bleeding
- foul smelling stools
- tenesmus (**te-nez-mus**) - painful stools)

Additional symptoms that may be associated with this disease

- bloody stools
- joint pain
- incontinence
- swollen gums
- constipation
- bloated feeling

Signs and Tests

- An abdominal examination may reveal a mass or tenderness.
- tests that show findings of Crohn's disease
 - endoscopy, colonoscopy, or sigmoidoscopy with small bowel biopsy
 - enteroclysis (en-ter-ok-li-sis)
 - barium enema
 - upper GI series

- positive stool guaiac
- A stool culture may be done to rule out other possible causes of the symptoms.

Treatment

- Medications may control the inflammatory process.
- Antibiotics to treat abscesses and fistulas, if present.
- Changes in the diet may improve symptoms.
- Multivit and mineral supplementation
- Avoidence of aggrevating food
- Surgical treatment of complications such as an obstruction may be necessary.

Prognosis

- This is a chronic disease characterized by periods of improvement followed by the deterioration of symptoms.
- There is an increased risk of small bowel or colorectal carcinoma.

Complications

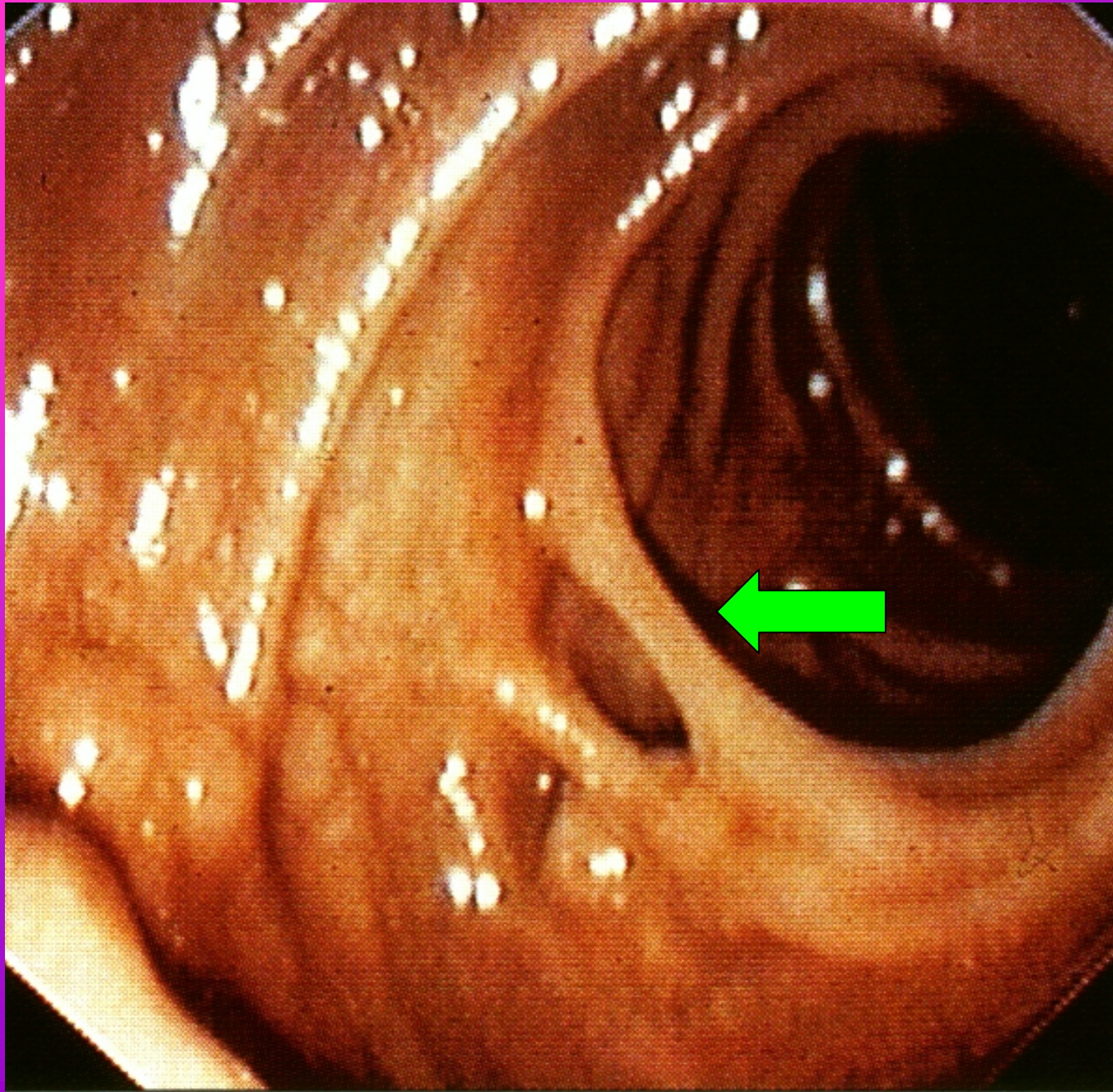
- fistulas may occur to the bladder, vagina, or the skin
- bowel obstructions
- nutritional deficiencies



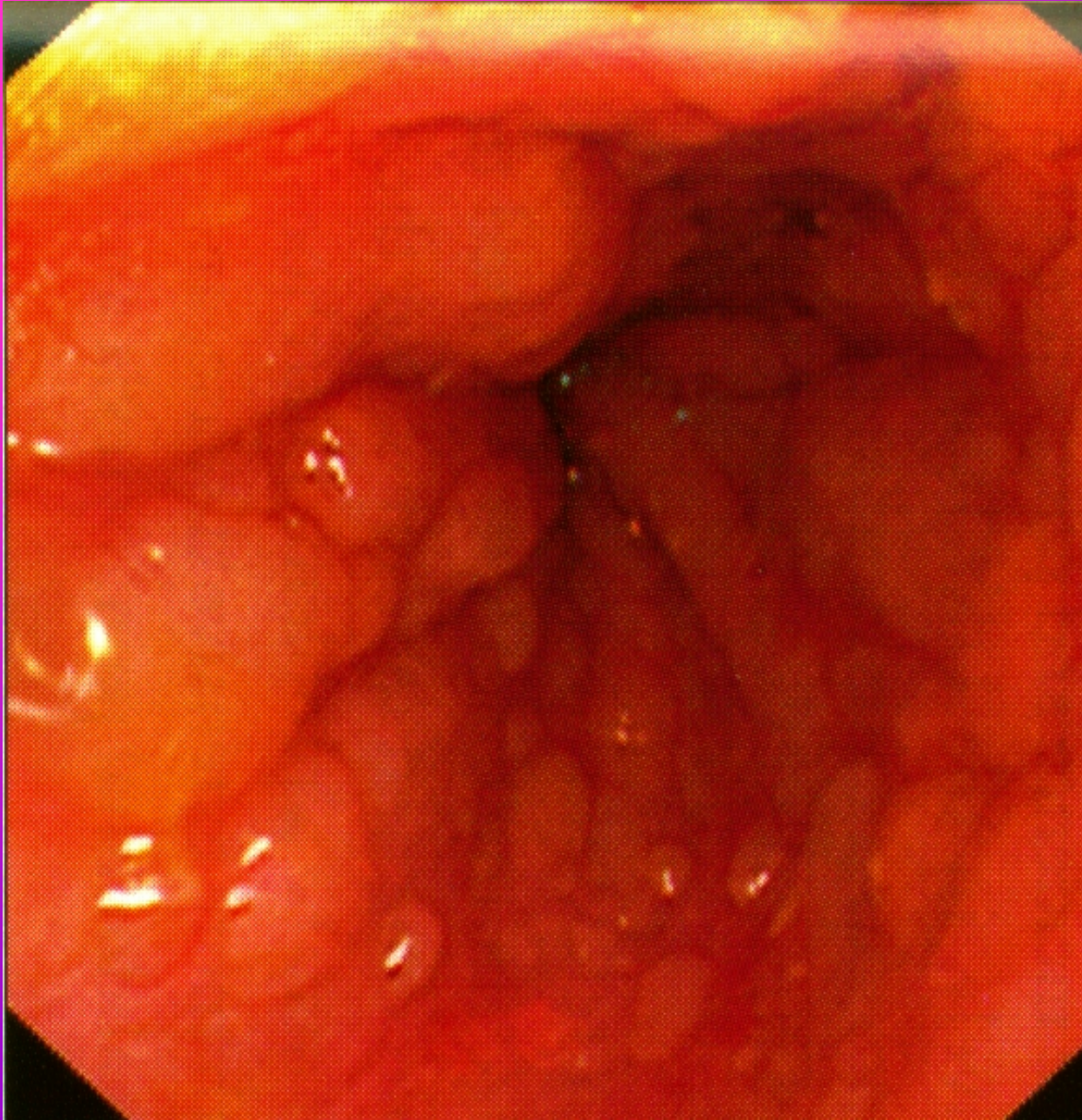
Fistula



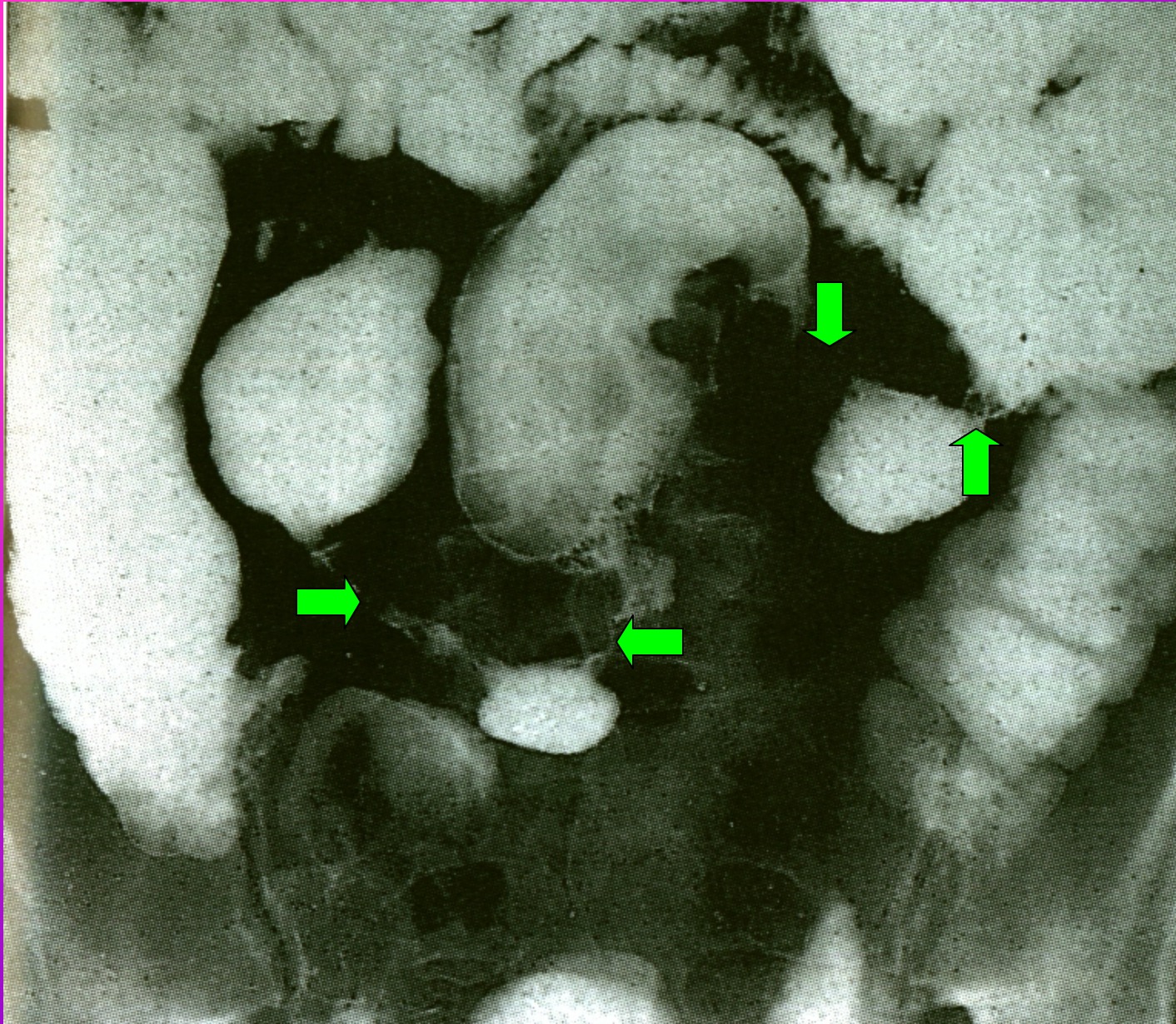
Anal Fistula



**Crohn's
fibrosis in
the
duodenum
which often
leads to
obstruction.**



**Crohn's
multiply
inflammatory
polyps giving a
"cobblestone"
appearance.
Similar lesions
are seen in UC.**



Four strictures of the small intestine seen on a follow through barium follow through X-ray.