

before ingesting just to make sure you're taking the correct one. You can avoid simple mistakes that way. If you receive scheduled outpatient medication IV infusions, track the dates and time of treatment on your calendar. If you ever have what you perceive to be an abnormal or allergic reaction to a prescribed drug, promptly contact your doctor (or tell the nurse if in a hospital setting).

- **Track disease patterns.** Keep a daily log of how you're feeling and if the prescribed medications or treatments are working. Write down what foods or drinks you've had during the day that made you feel good, better, or worse. Make it simple. Record enough detail to better track disease flare-up and remission patterns. This can also help your doctor because you'll be better able to summarize your medical status.

- **Eat smart.** Always discuss your individual dietary needs with your treating physician. He or she may even suggest you see a nutritionist.

- **Keep active and strong.** Physical activity is important as we all know. It's especially vital for those of us with chronic illness and who may also be on certain medications that can thin bones over time. Getting in 30 minutes of brisk walking a day can do wonders for your body, mind, and soul. Choose an additional activity that excites you – it may be working out at the gym, playing tennis, bowling, taking a fitness class, hiking, dancing, etc. Exercise can cause the release of endorphins which promote a feeling of wellness!

- **Live your dreams.** Don't let Crohn's (or ulcerative colitis) stop you from aspiring to do what makes you happy in life. No matter how challenging your disease, you can still make career and personal dreams come true. I know firsthand how tiring it can be to forge ahead sometimes, but fight through and take productive steps. No matter how small, keep at it. Focusing on positive life-affirming goals is a great source of inspiration. Develop a well-organized, achievable

- **See humor in everything.** So many times when I've struggled with my Crohn's, it would have been easy to wallow away. But finding even one ounce of humor in those circumstances kept me sane! Sometimes you might need a little distance to see the comedy in a prior situation, but you'll eventually be able to sit back and laugh at the pure insanity. If you can't muster up some humor in the most embarrassing or painful of moments, reach out to a trusted loved one who can make you laugh and lift your spirits. Try watching my favorite comedy movie – The Wedding Singer with Adam Sandler. Trust me, I'm not making light of rough patches – it's about finding the most basic way to handle stress.

- **Support the "cause".** Getting involved with the CCFA's New England Chapter is an excellent way to obtain support you or your child may need, meet others who have IBD, attend educational events,

fundraisers, learn more about the diseases, and gather helpful tips. Volunteering is a great means to support the "cause" and help others. Giving back is productive and admirable. You can help make a real difference and feel great about that. For more information, go to: [www.ccfa.org/chapters/ne](http://www.ccfa.org/chapters/ne).

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*"Crohn's Disease does not define me...it's just something I have and deal with head on...it has never stopped me from accomplishing goals and having a successful career and personal life." - Jill Cascarano*

Additionally, many doctors have helpful handouts to take home and read or will direct you to specific web resources. If a particular food or beverage causes your disease symptoms to worsen, try limiting portions or cutting the culprit out for a bit. Replace it with an alternative that's more soothing and/or bland. It takes some trial and error eating as smartly as you can based on your disease symptoms. If you are not physically able to eat enough on bad days, keep nutritional supplement drinks handy (Ensure or Boost, to name a few). Aim for reduced sugar versions. These drinks provide nutrients and calories. Drink enough water to stay hydrated.

action plan, and you'll soon be making things happen. Remember, there are excellent gastroenterologists and hospitals across the country, so don't let the disease stop you from relocating to a different area for career, college, or personal enjoyment.

- **Take care during flare-ups.** Don't forget to take good care of yourself at all times. You have more control over your body than you think. Getting enough sleep, good nutrition, exercise, and quality time with your loved ones can help boost your immune system and overall health. Well, it can't hurt!

Disclaimer: This article is not meant to replace professional medical advice or service. Always consult your regular healthcare providers for personal health and fitness concerns.

