

IBD specialist Dr. Russell Cohen explains how physicians choose the right IBD medication for you

Video Transcript

Hi, I'm Dr. Russell Cohen, professor of medicine and director of the Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center here at the University of Chicago. Today, we're going to discuss reasons why doctors choose certain medicines for patients with inflammatory bowel disease. One of the first questions I always ask my patients is what medicines have you already been on and what has been your experience with them? Have they worked for you? Have you had any side effects? Were you on too low a dose, too high a dose? Or maybe things had just worked out fine?

Many times when we look at different medicines, we determine what medicine are we going to use to get somebody better as we say induce remission, and then what medicines are we going to use to keep the patient better, which is maintaining the remission? Both Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis and associated conditions are chronic relapsing inflammatory diseases. So it is important not just to get someone well but to keep them well almost always with medications. Sometimes the choice of medicines depends upon whether the patient can or will take pills, versus medicines that are given by a shot, or medicines that require an intravenous.

Some patients simply can't do one of the other and end up having a preference for a particular delivery. For example, you might think that patients would not want to give themselves a shot but actually some people don't like taking pills and they feel that the shot medicine might work better. Some people prefer an intravenous medicine because the medicine is delivered by a health care professional in a controlled setting. But it's also more inconvenient because that person then has to travel to the location and wait while the medicine is mixed, and then wait for it to go in as well, and sometimes even has to be monitored afterwards too. Some medical conditions, such as diabetes, may limit our ability to use medicines, such as steroids.

Other factors that we consider are whether you've had infection before, whether you've had any type of cancer or tumor before, and sometimes even whether you are someone who'd be very susceptible to a side effect from a medicine, perhaps due to your family's history with that medicine as well. Well I hope this has been helpful introduction of some of the things that go through our mind when choosing or helping you choose the best medicine for your disease. This is Dr. Russell Cohen. Thank you for joining me today.