



## Eric's Story

### *Success with the Specific Carbohydrate Diet*

The onset of symptoms was in the Fall of 1997. I was 32 years old and had been healthy and active all my life. Up to then I had zero health problems, not even any allergies. I noticed swelling in my groin area, near my anus. A couple weeks passed and it did not go away. With its location so close to my rectum, I suspected it was related, so I went to see a gastroenterologist first. This was the “ice breaker” of having to discuss my bowels, rectum, anus, etc. and having my butt examined. I felt very embarrassed; these are body parts that people don’t typically discuss! The gastroenterologist didn’t know what the swelling was and suggested seeing a general surgeon. The general surgeon, after examining my butt inside and out (more embarrassment), determined it was an abscess. He lanced it and cleaned it out (ouch!) After this, I began to have odd bowel habits; nearly every evening I would have the urge to defecate repeatedly, though I would only pass a small amount of stool. The feeling would be preceded by a nauseous feeling. During a follow-up examination, I described this to the general surgeon and he indicated that was a symptom of “colitis”. That was the first time I heard that term! I went back to the gastroenterologist and he suggested a colonoscopy. A week later, he diagnosed me with Crohn’s disease (another first) and said I would have the disease for the rest of my life. He said Crohn’s is somewhat of a mystery; in that it has some indications of an infection and some indications of an auto-immune disease. He prescribed Asacol and said I would likely be on some form of medication for the rest of my life. WOW...I have been diagnosed with a chronic disease...how could this be!? It was now the Spring of 1998.

Over the following weeks I took a regimen of Cortisone/steroid and continued to take the Asacol and the urge/need to defecate varied from a couple to several times a day and sometimes I would pass bloody stool. Hoping to find a solution/cure, I contacted the well-known and respected Shands Hospital at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. When I was able to get to Shands, they did more internal (sigmoidoscopy) and external examinations (the site of the lanced abscess had not closed and was now a fistula). By now I was over being embarrassed to talk about my bowels and previously “unmentionable” body parts. They prescribed more Cortisone/steroid and Pentasa instead of the Asacol. The Shands doctor also said the disease was somewhat of a mystery, but that there was no relation with diet. The Cortisone and Proctofoam provided some relief from the frequent bowel movements, pain and bleeding. My symptoms gradually got worse though, and over several months I had lost 20 pounds. My

symptoms were; abdominal pain, nausea, little appetite, little salivation, indigestion (belching) and heartburn every evening, fatigue every evening, rapid pulse, fever every night, bloody and PAINFUL bowel movements, and one fistula. The Shands doctor then recommended I go on Imuran (a strong immunosuppressant). It would require regular blood tests to monitor my liver function. He said it is a drug you go on and likely do not go off. Whoa!...this sounded serious to me! I believe I was gradually dying. I told him I intended to exhaust all alternative treatments before starting the drug. It was the Fall of 1998.

At about this same time my sister, while researching treatments for Crohn's, discovered the book; Breaking the Vicious Cycle; Intestinal Health Through Diet by Elaine Gottschall. The book said after one month on the diet (which is generically called the Specific Carbohydrate Diet – SCD), you would know if it was going to help. On New Year's Day 1999, with my wife's support, I decided to commit to a month on the diet. After only two weeks, I felt much better! I no longer had indigestion! No abdominal pain! No fever! No rapid pulse! My bowel movements were no longer painful, nor my stool bloody! After one month, I had gained about 10 pounds back and the only symptom remaining was the fistula! At six weeks, the fistula was gone, too! At 2 months I was back to my old 180 pound energetic self!

At my request the doctor at Shands Hospital allowed me to gradually taper off all medications; and still no symptoms. He was interested in the "remarkable" recovery, but he said that I was anecdotal evidence that the diet works. I stuck to the diet strictly for one year after all symptoms had subsided. After that I began cheating some. To this day, I generally eat according to the diet but not strictly. I am in excellent health, with no sign of any chronic disease! A couple times, when I have cheated too much for too long, I have noticed the swelling begin (the original symptom when it all started). I jumped back to the diet strictly and the swelling disappeared.

It seems some of us just cannot tolerate the modern Western diet; high in refined flours and sugars. The diet we must follow, generically called the Specific Carbohydrate Diet, is much healthier anyway!

I make an effort to openly discuss that "I have Crohn's disease". It is amazing how many people respond with, "I have a friend [or relative] with that". I tell them about the diet and suggest they let their friend know about the [www.scdiet.org](http://www.scdiet.org) website, or contact me, to find out more.

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