

October 20, 2010

Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada Announces Can't Wait – a Mobile Tool Designed to Find a Bathroom in a Hurry

A recent survey of Canadians living with or affected by inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), carried out by the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada (CCFC), found that most sufferers stay home when their disease is active because of the lack of public bathroom access.

The survey, which polled just under 1,400 IBD sufferers during the summer of 2010, found that due to the unpredictable nature of the disease and fear of having an embarrassing accident in public:

- 78 per cent of English-speaking and 75 per cent of French-speaking respondents have chosen to stay home during a flare-up for fear of not being able to access a bathroom.
- 72 per cent of English-speaking and 82 per cent of French-speaking respondents restricted their travel for fear of not being able to access a bathroom.
- 75 per cent of English-speaking and 72 per cent of French-speaking respondents reported having been embarrassed or humiliated to ask to use bathroom facilities.
- 44 per cent of English and 39 per cent of French respondents have had an accident in public due to bathroom inaccessibility.

Inflammatory bowel disease is comprised of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis: two similar, yet distinct, conditions which cause intestinal tissue to become inflamed, form sores and bleed easily. Patients suffer from symptoms including abdominal pain, cramping, fatigue and diarrhea that is often urgent and unexpected. More than 200,000 Canadians – an estimated one in 160 – live with IBD. There is no cure, no known cause, and little public understanding of the pain, chronic suffering and isolation IBD patients courageously cope with every day of their lives.

To help reduce the feeling of isolation experienced by people living with IBD, and to raise awareness about this chronic disease, CCFC is launching an iPhone and Android application that will help people find the public bathroom closest to them in a hurry. The ***Can't Wait*** application works in two ways: it uses GPS to track the user's location and point to the closest bathroom; and it allows users to add bathrooms to share with the entire ***Can't Wait*** community, their friends, or just for their own use. It is available as a free download through iTunes, by searching for ***Can't Wait***.

"We have known for a long time that bathroom access is literally a visceral issue for people living with Crohn's and colitis, so we're proud to offer a tool that will help them live their lives with more freedom and dignity," says Dr. Kevin Glasgow, CCFC's Chief Executive Officer.

“People living with IBD too often face their conditions in silence, afraid to venture away from home, cutting off the possibility of many great experiences. While the search for a cure continues, we believe this support system will open many doors, and help to lift some of the burden of IBD.”

A web-based version of **Can't Wait** is also available at cantwait.ca, which allows users to search for a specific location in Canada and find public bathrooms either en route or close by. Users can also link to both versions through ccfc.ca.

CCFC volunteers have inputted over 600 bathrooms in several major Canadian cities, but CCFC urges new users to input bathrooms they know are accessible to the public. The application also allows users to list bathroom hours and any information that makes access easier (such as whether a key is required). Users of the web version can also submit bathroom locations.

November is Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month in Canada, and throughout the month CCFC will celebrate the courage of Canadians living with these debilitating diseases through a number of announcements and programs, including:

- Winners of the third-annual Gutsiest Canadians contest;
- TV host and master building Mike Holmes appears on the Bravo! show Star Portraits premiering November 6, and has donated part of his portrait auction to CCFC;
- The CCFC & You Education Symposium series, occurring in over 20 locations during Fall 2010 and Spring 2011;
- A series of ulcerative colitis webinars, featuring noted gastroenterologists Dr. Hillary Steinhart and Dr. Guy Aumais;
- Launch of a patient education DVD on Crohn's disease.

Details for all Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month activities are online at getgutsymonth.ca, as well as full bathroom access survey results.

Facts about IBD

- Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are the two most common forms of IBD.
- Patients suffer from symptoms including abdominal pain, cramping, fatigue and diarrhea.
- Most people are diagnosed by the age of 30, and many will experience periods of remission and flare-ups, often requiring long-term medication, hospitalization or surgery.
- The main difference between Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis is that Crohn's can affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract, from the mouth to the anus, causing patches of inflammation. Colitis affects only the inner layer of the colon, or large bowel, and always starts in the rectum causing continuous inflammation which may spread into the rest of the colon.
- Crohn's disease cannot be cured by drugs or surgery, although both can help relieve symptoms.

- Ulcerative colitis can be completely eliminated by surgically removing parts of the colon, but after surgery waste materials may have to be stored and expelled through an external appliance such as a colostomy bag.
- Afflicting more than 200,000 Canadians, IBD is more common than Multiple Sclerosis or HIV and about as common as Epilepsy or Type 1 Diabetes. The average per-person cost in Canada is more than \$9,000 per year and there are no known causes or cures.

Facts about CCFC

- The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada (CCFC) is a volunteer-based, not-for-profit, medical research foundation dedicated to finding the cure for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. The Foundation is committed to educating IBD patients, their families, health professionals and the general public about the diseases.
- Since its founding, CCFC has invested more than \$65 million in IBD research, making the foundation a world leader in non-governmental funding of IBD research.
- Canadian researchers funded by CCFC are conducting cutting edge research and are sustaining the hope for a cure worldwide.

For more information about CCFC, please visit [.ccfc.ca](http://ccfc.ca), for more information on Crohn's and Colitis Awareness month, please visit .getgutsymonth.com.

The CCFC Bathroom Access Survey was carried out online amongst a nationally representative sample of just under 1,400 Canadians aged 18+.

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In addition to CCFC's professional staff, CCFC has committed volunteers and members across Canada who would be willing to speak with media about their experience with IBD. If you would like to speak with one of our volunteers, or for more information, please contact Adriana Lurz or Ive Balins at Strategic Objectives.

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