

# Ulcerative Colitis

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Ulcerative colitis (UC) is a chronic disease that causes swelling and irritation and sometimes sores on the inner lining of the large intestine. Ulcerative colitis is a disease of the gastrointestinal tract (GI) also known as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). This disease is for a lifetime. It is common in people of a Jewish decent, those who have family members that have IBD and people over 60 or between the ages of 15-30. There are no actual cures for it but ways to manage the symptoms. The goal of physicians who have patients with UC is to get them into remission and be able to maintain that remission.

Ulcerative colitis affects the inner lining of the large intestine. The large intestine is the last part of the GI tract. The large intestine contains the appendix, cecum, colon and rectum. The job of the large intestine is to turn remaining waste from the small intestine from a liquid form to a solid. When someone has ulcerative colitis, they usually have symptoms of needing to have a bowel movement quite urgently. You might end up having to go more frequently, have the feeling you can't finish going completely. There could be blood or pus in your stool. Some people might think the symptoms of UC are just things like food poisoning. Another big give way symptom of ulcerative colitis is weight loss. You tend to lose weight if your body is producing diarrhea nonstop. If you have ulcerative colitis you need to make sure you try to stay hydrated as much as possible.

Ulcerative colitis is autoimmune disorder is thought to be caused by an abnormal immune reaction in the large intestine. Instead of the body just identifying harmful bacteria and viruses it is thought that the bacteria and viruses are triggered to attack the inner lining of the large

intestine. By attacking the inner lining, it causes inflammation, swelling and small sores called ulcers in the large intestine.

To diagnose this doctor will do labs, they will look at the GI tract by doing an endoscopy or colonoscopy to get a look at the intestines. There are specialists that patients will go to that have ulcerative colitis, these specialists focus mainly on the digestive tract. During a physical exam doctors will look for abdominal distention or swelling. They ask if there is any discomfort. They listen to the abdomen for digestive sounds.

Doctors need different kinds of tests done to help figure out if ulcerative colitis is what someone has. Patients will be sent to get lab tests done to help diagnose ulcerative colitis. This may include blood tests and stool samples. In a blood test they are looking for anemia, inflammation or infection, markers that show on going inflammation and low proteins common in ulcerative colitis. When they analyze a stool sample, they are looking for blood and trying to see if there is any other kind of infection that might cause similar symptoms of ulcerative colitis. Endoscopies of the large intestine are the most accurate ways to diagnose ulcerative colitis. They use a colonoscope to look inside the rectum and colon. They look for the irritated and swollen tissue, abnormal growths and ulcers on the inside of the large intestine.

There is no cure for ulcerative colitis, doctors are constantly trying to use medication therapy to help patients stay in remission and ease the symptoms. These are some types of medications: Amino salicylates help control inflammation in the intestines. Corticosteroids help reduce the overactive immune system and help reduce inflammation. Immunomodulators biologics, also called anti-TNF therapies are other medications to help ease the symptoms. Another treatment is surgery. One might need surgery to have their entire colon removed if there is too much damage done to it. They also might need it removed due to having cancer in their

colon as well. Hopefully that isn't needed, and they can use medication therapy to have long term remission.

Patients with ulcerative colitis must change some parts of their lifestyle. This is important especially during flare ups of their symptoms. For instance, when they are planning vacations or trips, they might need to do small outings at a time to allow themselves to have an adequate amount of time for the bathroom. Events and activities that are timed or in remote locations might not be something that is doable during a flare up. The things one might eat could cause issues. Patients with ulcerative colitis tend to stick to bland diets. A type of diet that is recommended is called the BRAT diet. It consists of breads, rice, apple sauce, toast. All things that wouldn't give your colon more reason to act up. When you have ulcerative colitis, they may suggest that you stay away from things that have a lot of acid in them. You might not be able to eat as many spicy peppers as you'd like or eat a lot of greasy foods.

Living with ulcerative colitis is a lifetime of treatments and changes that you must continue in order to feel decent. You don't want to irritate your colon more by deciding to eat a bunch of foods that cause you to have a lot of bowel movements while you're on a long road trip. You have to make sure to make appointments to visit with your doctors to get repeat endoscopies to make sure your colon is remaining healthy. Patients must keep up on the medications and make sure they continue to help you. Everyone with ulcerative colitis must make adjustments to fit their daily living activities.

## Citations

Ulcerative Colitis. (2014, September 1). Retrieved January 29, 2020, from <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/ulcerative-colitis>