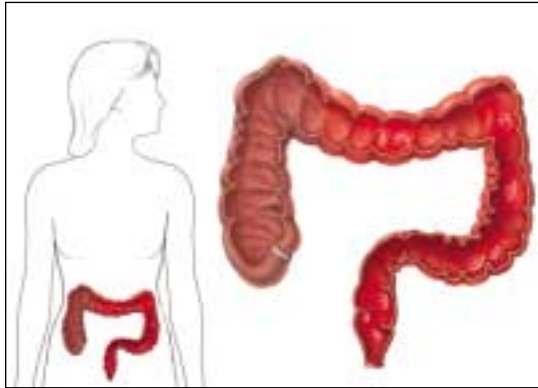


# Ulcerative Colitis

## Background Information

### Ulcerative Colitis



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Ulcerative colitis (UC) is a chronic inflammatory disease of the large intestine (colon) that is diagnosed in about five of every 10,000 people. Symptoms of UC vary, but include bloody diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever and unexplained weight loss. Inflammation usually starts in the rectum (the lowest segment of the large intestine) and may spread to other areas of the colon. It may be difficult for your physician to identify UC and to distinguish it from Crohn's disease or other types of colitis.

Your physician may, therefore, perform one or

more colonoscopic examinations and obtain biopsy specimens for microscopic examination by a surgical pathologist. The pathologist may establish the diagnosis of UC and will determine whether dysplasia (precancer), cancer or other abnormalities are present. This information is essential in determining if further treatment is necessary and, if so, what kind will be most appropriate. It is important to accurately evaluate UC because afflicted patients are at increased risk of developing cancer of the colon and/or rectum.

The exact cause of UC is unknown. Those afflicted are typically within one of two age groups (15-30 and 50-70). Identifiable UC risk factors include a family history of inflammatory bowel disease and/or Jewish ancestry. There is no known cure for UC; however, medical treatment and surgery can be very effective in alleviating symptoms and controlling the risk of cancer.

## Treatment options for ulcerative colitis

(Only a physician can determine the best therapy to treat your condition.)

**Prescription medication therapy** The goal of prescription medication therapy is to alleviate symptoms, prevent attacks of the disease and promote healing of the colon. The drug Sulfasalazine may limit the frequency of UC attacks and help eliminate UC symptoms. Corticosteroids may also be prescribed to reduce inflammation. Many other potentially effective prescription medication options are available. Check with your physician.

**Surgery** Surgical removal of the colon or rectum may be necessary for patients who fail to respond to medical therapy or if there are complications associated with the disease, such as cancer.

## Measures you can take to relieve the symptoms of UC

- Maintain a high-fiber diet that is low in fat and calories; consult your physician for proper diet and nutrition information
- Avoid foods that are high in lactose, such as milk and sugar; spicy and acidic foods; foods that worsen diarrhea; and caffeinated beverages such as cola, coffee and tea
- Ensure an adequate daily fluid intake

## Important questions to ask your doctor

- How much of my colon is affected by UC?
- What are my treatment options?
- What are the risks and side effects of these treatment options?
- What can I do to take care of myself during and after treatment?
- What will be done to monitor and minimize my cancer risk?
- How long will the treatment last, and what will be my follow-up?
- To whom may I turn for nutritional and dietary information?

## Sources of additional information

**American College of Gastroenterology** 703/820-7400 • [www.acg.gi.org](http://www.acg.gi.org)  
Patient education brochures, current clinical updates and late-breaking news

**American Gastroenterological Association** 301/654-2055  
[www.gastro.org/public/digestinfo/html](http://www.gastro.org/public/digestinfo/html)  
Access to expert panels, support groups and detailed diagnostic and treatment information

**Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America** 800/932-2434 • [www.cdfa.org](http://www.cdfa.org)  
Patient education, dietary information, support groups and clinical updates

**National Institutes of Health** [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)  
Patient education information, late-breaking clinical trial news and clinical updates

**Pharmaceutical Information Network** [www.pharminfo.com/disease/gastro/html](http://www.pharminfo.com/disease/gastro/html)  
Access to articles, research news and discussion groups on many gastrointestinal disorders



**Associated Pathology Medical Group, Inc.**

[www.apmglab.com](http://www.apmglab.com) or 800-848-2764