

Ulcerative Colitis

Ulcerative colitis is a disease where inflammation develops in the large intestine. Bloody diarrhea is a common symptom when the disease flares-up. Medication taken each day can usually prevent symptoms from flaring-up. When a flare-up does occur, treatment can usually ease symptoms. Surgery to remove the large intestine is needed in some cases.

What is ulcerative colitis (UC)?

Ulcerative colitis (UC) is a disease of the large intestine (the colon and rectum).

- **Colitis** means 'inflammation of the colon'.
- **Ulcerative** means that ulcers tend to develop. An ulcer is a raw area on the lining of the intestine, which may bleed.

The inflammation and ulcers in the large intestine cause the common symptoms - diarrhea, and passing blood and mucus.

Understanding the gut

The gut (gastrointestinal tract) is the long tube that starts at the mouth and ends at the anus.

Food passes down the esophagus (gullet), into the stomach, then into the small intestine.

The small intestine has three sections - the duodenum, jejunum and ileum. The small intestine is where food is digested and absorbed into the bloodstream. The structure of the gut then changes to become the large intestine (colon and rectum).

The colon absorbs water, and contains food that has not been digested, such as fiber. This is passed into the last part of the large intestine, the rectum, where it is stored as feces. Feces (motions or stools) are then passed out into the toilet.

Who gets ulcerative colitis?

About 1 in 1000 people in the UK have UC. It usually starts between the ages of 15 and 40. It affects men and women equally.

What causes ulcerative colitis?



