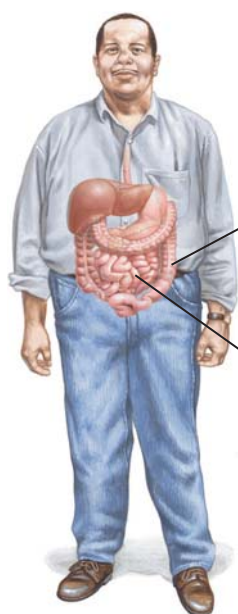


MANAGING YOUR ULCERATIVE COLITIS

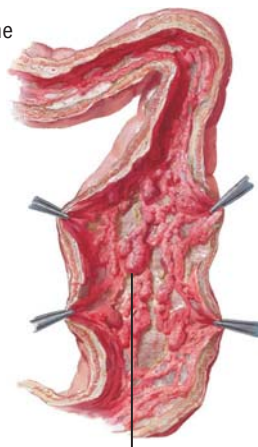


Ulcerative colitis (UC) is a disease that causes sores (ulcers) in the lining of the lower digestive tract, the colon (large intestine). UC affects men and women equally, usually between 15 and 35 years old.

Large intestine (colon)

Small intestine

F. Netter M.D.

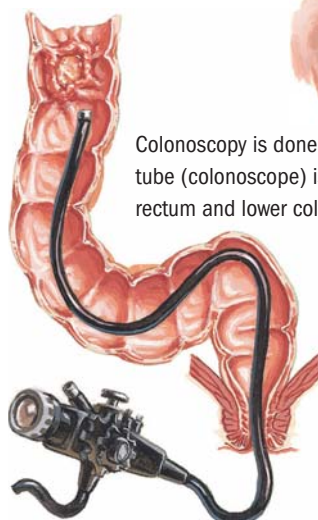


The ulcers sometimes bleed and make pus and mucus.



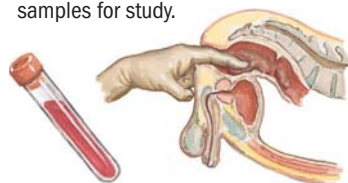
About half of people have mild symptoms. The most common symptoms are abdominal pain (usually on the left side) and bloody diarrhea. Diarrhea increases in frequency as UC worsens. Up to several bowel movements a day is common.

Symptoms outside the colon may include joint pains, usually in knees, ankles, and wrists, and eye problems. UC can cause complications such as bleeding, bowel perforation, and abdominal infections.



Colonoscopy is done to confirm diagnosis. A lighted flexible tube (colonoscope) is put into the rectum to look at the rectum and lower colon and collect tissue samples.

Your doctor will do a physical exam and get blood and stool samples for study.



What Is Ulcerative Colitis?

Ulcerative colitis (UC) is a disease that causes sores in the lining of the digestive tract. Irritation is found in the lower part of the tract, the colon (large intestine), and can result in open sores or wounds called ulcers. These ulcers sometimes bleed and make pus and mucus. The colon also empties often, which causes diarrhea.

UC affects men and women equally and seems to run in families. About 250,000 Americans have UC. People between 15 and 35 years old are affected most often. Most people have UC for their whole lives. About half have mild symptoms. Others have more frequent, severe attacks.

What Causes UC?

The cause is unknown.

What Are the Symptoms of UC?

Most common symptoms are pain in the abdomen (belly) and bloody diarrhea with mucus. Bowel movements may relieve the pain, which is usually on the left side. As UC worsens, diarrhea increases, and several bowel movements daily is common. Periods of remission occur, but more than 75% of people have relapses.

Other symptoms include fatigue, weight loss, loss of appetite, and fever. Symptoms outside the colon include joint pains, usually in knees, ankles, and wrists. Eye problems may also occur. Complications include severe bleeding, perforation of the bowel, megacolon (dilation of the colon), and peritonitis (infection in the abdomen). People with UC also have greater chances of having colon cancer.

How Is UC Diagnosed?

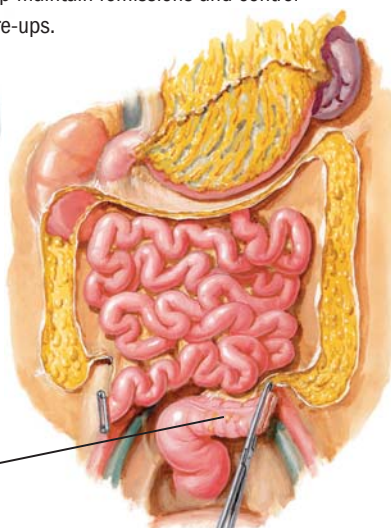
The doctor will review the medical history and do a complete physical examination. The doctor will take blood and stool samples to check for bleeding and infection. UC is confirmed by colonoscopy. In this procedure, a lighted flexible tube is put into the rectum to look at the rectum and lower part of the colon. Colon tissue samples are taken and sent for study with a microscope.

MANAGING YOUR ULCERATIVE COLITIS



The treatment goal is to relieve symptoms, control inflammation, and prevent complications. Antiinflammatory drugs help maintain remissions and control flare-ups.

People who don't respond to medicine or have severe symptoms may need surgery. About one fourth of people need surgery at some time.



Try to keep physically active.



Don't use aspirin; it can cause bleeding. Limit coffee, alcohol, and raw fruits and vegetables. These can worsen diarrhea.

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How Is UC Treated?

The goal is to relieve symptoms, control inflammation, and prevent complications.

The main medicines are antiinflammatory drugs, including mesalamine, sulfasalazine, olsalazine, and steroids. Mesalamine is used to maintain remissions and control minor to moderate symptom flare-ups. Steroids are for major flare-ups and to maintain remissions. Severe symptoms may mean hospitalization so the bowel can rest (no food by mouth), and intravenous food is given.

About one quarter of people need surgery, when medicines don't work or disease is severe. Surgery involves removing part of the colon.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing UC:

- ✓ **DO** take medicine as prescribed.
- ✓ **DO** ask your doctor if you should take vitamins, minerals, or iron replacement.
- ✓ **DO** try to keep to normal physical activity.
- ✓ **DO** see your doctor regularly. Periodic colonoscopy is important to watch for cancerous changes.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you get fever or chills, increased number of bowel movements, or increased bleeding.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if your abdomen becomes swollen, pain increases, or vomiting starts.

- ⊗ **DON'T** use aspirin. It increases the risk of bleeding.
- ⊗ **DON'T** drink coffee and alcohol in excess. Limit roughage (raw fruits and vegetables). These can make diarrhea worse.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America
Tel: (800) 343-3637
Website: <http://www.ccfa.org>
- National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse
Tel: (800) 891-5389
Website: <http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health/digest/digest.htm>