

Ulcerative Colitis

Ulcerative Colitis (UC) is a condition that causes superficial inflammation and ulceration of the lining of the rectum and colon (the large bowel). In UC, tiny ulcers develop on the surface of the lining and these may bleed and produce pus.

The inflammation usually begins in the rectum and lower colon, but it may affect the entire colon. If it only affects the rectum, it is called proctitis, while if it affects the whole colon it may be called total colitis or pancolitis.

It's one of the two main forms of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). The other is [Crohn's Disease](#).

Ulcerative Colitis is a chronic condition. This means that it is ongoing and life-long, although you may have periods of good health (remission), as well as times when symptoms are more active (relapses or flare-ups).

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of Ulcerative colitis vary and can range from mild to severe. They may also change over time. Some patients remain well for a long time, while others have frequent flare-ups.

The main symptoms of IBD are

- **Diarrhoea** sometimes mixed with blood, mucus and pus
- **Cramping pains in the abdomen** which can be very severe and often occur before passing a stool
- **Tiredness and fatigue** due to the illness itself, or from anaemia or the side effects of some of the drugs used for IBD or from a lack of sleep if you have to keep getting up at night with pain or diarrhoea
- **Feeling generally unwell**
- **Loss of appetite and loss of weight**
- **Anaemia** (a reduced number of red blood cells) from loss of blood with your stools and poor appetite
- **Mouth ulcers**

Who gets Ulcerative Colitis?

It's estimated that the disease affects about one in every 420 people in the UK (roughly 146,000 people). It is more common in white people of European descent, especially those descended from Ashkenazi Jews (those who lived in Eastern Europe and Russia).

It can start at any age, though it often appears for the first time between the ages of 15 and 25. It affects men and women equally.

What are the causes?

We now believe that UC is caused by a combination of factors:

- the genes you're born with
- plus an abnormal reaction of the digestive system to bacteria in the intestine
- along with an unknown 'trigger' that could include viruses, other bacteria, diet, stress, or something else in the environment.

What are the treatments?

There isn't a cure at the moment but a lot can be done with medication and surgery to help keep symptoms under control.

Ulcerative Colitis can often be managed by drugs. These include anti-inflammatory drugs (such as steroids, 5ASAs), immunosuppressants (such as azathioprine, methotrexate and ciclosporin), and biological drugs like infliximab and adalimumab.

Other drugs used for IBD include antibiotics such as metronidazole and ciprofloxacin, and symptomatic drugs such as antidiarrhoeals and bulking agents.

Surgery for Ulcerative colitis is

- reserved for failure of medical treatment
- complications from medical treatment or complications from the disease itself
- necessary if cancerous changes are suspected or diagnosed after 10-15 years of suffering from Ulcerative Colitis

What is the Surgery for Ulcerative colitis?

Surgery offers a good alternative to medical management for severe ulcerative colitis. The principle of surgery for Ulcerative Colitis is that if you remove the colon

and rectum then you do not have the diseased organ inside you. However, it means that you will have an ileostomy (stoma) temporarily if you have an ileoanal pouch procedure or permanently if you have a panproctectomy.

Today the results of surgery are very encouraging and most often performed laparoscopically (key hole techniques) and mean a speedy recovery. All surgeons specializing in treating inflammatory bowel disease should be able to offer you keyhole surgery if there are no contraindications to it.

It is best to discuss various surgical options for Ulcerative Colitis with your surgeons. There is an excellent patient information sheet on the types of surgery from Ulcerative colitis on the Crohn's & Colitis UK website ([click here](#))

[THIS HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM THE CROHN'S & COLITIS UK WEBSITE](#)