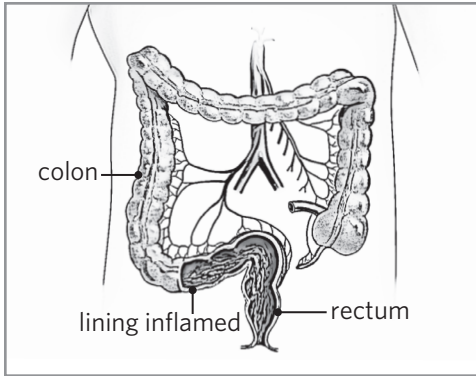


# Ulcerative Colitis



**Ulcerative colitis (UC) is an inflammatory bowel disease that usually begins in your rectum and then spreads into your colon.**

When you have UC, the lining of your colon and rectum becomes inflamed, or swollen. Ongoing inflammation can destroy the lining and cause sores, called ulcers. Ulcers can bleed and make pus and mucus.

If you have UC, you'll always have it. But symptoms can flare up or go into remission throughout your life. Take steps to reduce flare-ups by working with your doctor to develop a treatment plan that works for you.

## Symptoms

Swelling and sores in your colon and rectum can cause:

- **pain and cramping** in your belly area
- **frequent diarrhea**, sometimes with blood
- **nausea and vomiting** (in severe cases)
- **frequent urges to go**
- **bleeding** from your rectum
- **fatigue**

Over time, UC can also lead to weight loss. You lose important fluids and nutrients because of diarrhea and rectal bleeding, and your symptoms may cause you to lose your appetite.

## Treatment

UC medicines work in different ways to prevent or reduce inflammation:

**Anti-inflammatories** are often the first line of treatment. They can help reduce swelling.

**Corticosteroids** target your immune system to help reduce swelling when your symptoms flare up and you need fast relief. Because of side effects, they are only recommended for short-term use.

**Immune modifiers** work by blocking the immune system response that causes inflammation. They are sometimes prescribed with corticosteroids to help symptoms go into remission and stay in remission.

**Biologics** work against the specific part of your immune system that causes UC inflammation instead of targeting your entire immune system. They are often used for more advanced UC or when other medicines haven't worked.

Your doctor might prescribe antibiotics to fight infection or other medicines to reduce pain or stop diarrhea. He might also suggest dietary supplements to help make sure your body gets the nutrients you need to stay healthy.

**Plan regular appointments with your doctor—about every 3 to 4 months—to check up on your treatment plan.**

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To learn more, visit:

- **Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America**  
[www.ccfa.org](http://www.ccfa.org)
- **National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse**  
[www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov)

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## What You Can Do

**Stay hydrated.** Frequent diarrhea from UC can lead to dehydration. Fill a washable, refillable bottle with water, and take it with you wherever you go. If you're drinking enough, your urine will be clear to light yellow in color.

**Connect with others.** You can experience a range of emotions from living with UC, including fear, anger, frustration or even hopelessness at times. Let others support you. Call 1-888-MY-GUTPAIN or visit [www.ccfa.org](http://www.ccfa.org) to find support groups and connect with others who have UC.

**Reduce stress.** Stress and other strong emotions don't cause UC, but they can make symptoms worse. Make sleep a priority. Getting 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night helps your body recharge, which will help you handle stress better. Stick to a sleep schedule, even on the weekends.

**Screen for colon cancer.** UC may increase your risk of colon cancer. Take steps now to find changes in your colon before they become cancer. Ask your doctor when and how often you need to schedule screenings.

## Eating with UC

Pay attention to what you eat to help yourself heal, reduce symptoms and replace lost nutrients. Different foods affect people with UC in different ways, so there isn't one approach that's guaranteed to help. Here are some tips you may find helpful:

- **Eat smaller meals more often.** Have five smaller meals throughout the day, instead of three large ones.
- **Stay away from fried, high-fat and greasy foods.**
- **Experiment with fiber.** High-fiber foods may make your symptoms worse. Try different high-fiber grains and vegetables to see how your body tolerates them. You may want to avoid nuts, seeds, corn, popcorn, and vegetables like broccoli and cauliflower.
- **Keep a food diary.** Track what you eat and how it makes you feel. You may find that there are certain foods worth avoiding if they always end up causing pain, cramping or diarrhea.

Also, schedule an appointment with a dietitian for help with your eating plan to make sure you're getting the nutrients your body needs.

## Remember:

- UC is a chronic condition, but it can be managed with medicines and diet changes.
- You may need to try a combination of medicines before you find a treatment that works for you.
- Get support from others who have UC to help cope.