

# What Is Ulcerative Colitis?

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Ulcerative colitis is an inflammation (swelling) of the lining of the large bowel (colon and rectum).

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## How do I know if I have Ulcerative Colitis?

- Rectal bleeding.
  - Diarrhea.
  - Abdominal (stomach) cramps.
  - Weight loss.
  - Fevers.
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## What causes Ulcerative Colitis?

The cause of ulcerative colitis is unknown.

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## How can I correct it?

1. **Antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medicines** (aminosalicylates).
2. **Steroids (Prednisone)** are used for a short period of time if antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medicines do not work
3. **Immunomodulators** (6-mercaptopurine (Purinethol) or azathioprine (Imuran)) are used to control active disease.
4. **Immunosuppressive** (Infliximab \*Remicade\*, Humira).

To control the disease, aminosalicylates or immunomodulators are used for a long time.

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## When is surgery needed?

Surgery is used for patients who have life-threatening problems, such as large amounts of bleeding, perforation (a hole in the bowel), or infection. Surgery may also be needed for patients who have had the disease for a long time with no improvements while taking medicines. Surgery is necessary when patients develop precancerous or cancerous changes along the colon or rectal

lining. The type of surgery depends on where the disease is located, if there are problems, or if there is a risk developing cancer.

1. **Proctocolectomy and Brooke Ileostomy**: Is the removal of the entire colon, rectum, and anus and is often done in one or more stages. After the procedure the patient has a permanent **ileostomy** (an opening in the belly for getting rid of body wastes).

**Ileoanal Reservoir**: This procedure removes all the colon and rectum, but keeps the anal canal. The rectum is replaced with small bowel, which is changed to form a small pouch. The pouch acts as a reservoir (or an area to collect stool) to help decrease the stool frequency. Most patients have five to ten bowel movements per day, this avoids a permanent **ileostomy** but a short term **ileostomy** may be needed. These operations can be done laparoscopically (minimally invasive surgery).

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## How can I learn more?

You can also find information through the American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons (ASCRS) at <http://www.fascrs.org/patients/conditions/>

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## Do you have any questions or comments for your doctor?

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