



Patient Counseling Report

## ➤ **ULCERATIVE COLITIS**

### **WHAT IS ULCERATIVE COLITIS?**

Ulcerative colitis is a chronic disease of the colon, or large intestine that causes inflammation and ulceration of the colon's inner lining. Ulcerative colitis usually begins with inflammation in the rectum and lower colon, but it may also involve the entire colon. Pus, mucus and blood are excreted by ulcers, or tiny open sores, that form on the lining of the gastrointestinal tract.

Ulcerative colitis and a similar disease, Crohn's, are grouped under the category of diseases known as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). It is estimated that nearly half of a million Americans have ulcerative colitis. Ulcerative colitis affects both males and females primarily between the ages of 15-35.

Ulcerative colitis is associated with a slightly increased risk of small intestinal and colorectal cancer.

### **HOW IS ULCERATIVE COLITIS DIAGNOSED?**

There is no individual test that can definitively diagnose ulcerative colitis. To accurately diagnose ulcerative colitis, your doctor will evaluate the results of laboratory tests, X-rays, findings on endoscopy and pathology tests. Additional testing may need to be performed to eliminate other conditions because the symptoms of ulcerative colitis mimic those of other gastrointestinal disorders.

### **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ULCERATIVE COLITIS?**

Individuals with ulcerative colitis can experience any range of symptoms ranging from mild to severe. During times of remission symptoms may be very mild and during flare-ups symptoms may be more severe.

Common symptoms an individual may experience are:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Abdominal pain.

### **RISK FACTORS**

Some of the most common risk factors are:

- Family history
- Certain ethnic groups more than others (Caucasians and those of Jewish ancestry).

### **WHAT TREATMENT OPTIONS DO I HAVE?**

Your doctor may perform an endoscopic examination to diagnose and monitor your ulcerative colitis. The treatment for ulcerative colitis depends on the location and severity of disease, complications and response to previous treatment.

The goals of treatment are to control inflammation, correct nutritional deficiencies, and relieve symptoms like abdominal pain, diarrhea, and rectal bleeding. Most individuals with ulcerative colitis are treated with medication and some severe cases require surgery. Unfortunately, there is no cure for ulcerative colitis, however, treatment will help with the symptoms. Only a physician can determine the most appropriate treatment.

**Drug Therapy:** The goal of drug therapy is to induce and lengthen remission periods and reduce the severity of symptoms.

Anti-inflammatory drugs are used to reduce the inflammation. In some situations other medications may be appropriate to treat diarrhea, pain or infection.

**Surgery:** Surgical removal of the colon or rectum may be necessary for patients who fail to respond to medical therapy or for those who have complications associated with the disease, such as cancer.

### **WHAT ELSE SHOULD I ASK MY DOCTOR?**

Are there any other tests that we need to perform?

What treatment do you suggest?

What are the benefits and risks of this type of treatment?

What can I do to best manage this disease?

### **WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?**

American Gastroenterological Association: [www.gastro.org](http://www.gastro.org)

American College of Gastroenterology: [www.acg.gi.org](http://www.acg.gi.org)

American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy: [www.asge.org](http://www.asge.org)

Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America: [www.ccfca.org](http://www.ccfca.org)