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## Ulcerative Colitis

Ulcerative colitis is an inflammatory bowel disease that causes inflammation and sores, called ulcers, in the lining of the large intestine that includes the rectum and colon. It usually occurs only through continuous stretches of the colon, unlike Crohn's disease, which occurs anywhere in the digestive tract. The colon lining that is inflamed is injured and produce ulcers. These ulcers may bleed and create pus. This inflammation also causes the colon to empty frequently, causing diarrhea.

Ulcerative colitis can be debilitating and sometimes can lead to life-threatening complications. Because ulcerative colitis is a chronic condition, symptoms usually develop over time, rather than suddenly.

Colitis can be difficult to diagnose because symptoms such as abdominal pain and diarrhea are so similar to other intestinal disorders. About half the people diagnosed with ulcerative colitis have mild symptoms. Others may suffer frequent fevers, bloody diarrhea, nausea and severe abdominal cramps. It may also cause problems such as arthritis, inflammation of the eye, liver disease, and osteoporosis. It is not known why these problems occur outside the colon, but scientists think it may be the result of inflammation triggered by the immune system. Some of these problems go away when the colitis is treated.

There's no known cure for ulcerative colitis, but therapies are available that may dramatically reduce the signs and symptoms of ulcerative colitis and even bring about a long-term remission.