



Ulcerative colitis: your treatment and follow-up

Patient information | Source check: 2026-10-16

Which part of the bowel is affected?

UC usually starts in the rectum and extends continuously through different lengths of the large bowel. It mainly affects the lining. The pattern can change with treatment. Extent is not an inevitable sequence of stages.

Confirm the diagnosis

Blood and stool tests, endoscopy and biopsies are used together. Infection can resemble a flare. Calprotectin measures inflammation, while FIT measures blood. Neither establishes UC alone or replaces an indicated bowel examination.

Use treatment as prescribed

Mesalazine may be given by mouth, rectally or both. Steroids can settle a flare but are not maintenance treatment. Follow the prescribed course and any reduction plan. Do not stop suddenly without advice. Other medicines may provide longer control.

Keep monitoring

Feeling well does not always prove inflammation has settled. Blood tests, calprotectin and selected endoscopy assess control and safety. Recommended surveillance is separate from population screening and is not replaced by a negative FIT. Relevant follow-up will be documented in your endoscopy and/or histology report once tissue results are available.

Medicines, food and pregnancy plans

Keep prescribed maintenance treatment. Discuss nutrition, pregnancy plans, side effects or practical difficulties before changing medicines. Surgery can remove colonic disease, but pouch problems or symptoms outside the bowel may still need care.

Get help early

Worsening blood or urgency needs advice. Frequent bloody diarrhoea with fever, weakness or dehydration, severe pain, swelling or heavy bleeding needs urgent assessment. A painful red eye or changed vision also needs urgent assessment. Do not self-treat a severe flare with loperamide. Call 111 for collapse or unsafe travel.

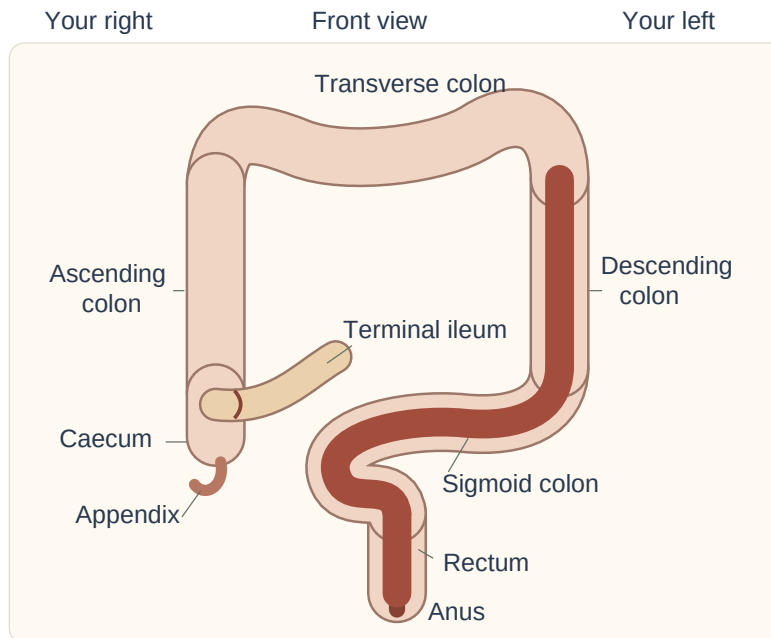
Call 111 if you collapse, have heavy bleeding with faintness, or are too unwell to travel safely.





Different extents of ulcerative colitis

Left-sided colitis



Highlighted colour shows one example of inflammation.
Separate example, not a stage or a prediction of spread.

This example includes the rectum, sigmoid and descending colon, towards the bend on your left. Your report may describe the extent and how active the inflammation looks.

Read this illustration alongside the advice in this guide.

