Ulcerative Colitis

What is Ulcerative Colitis?

Ulcerative colitis (UC) is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) that is characterized by an abnormal, prolonged immune response that creates long-lasting inflammation and ulcers (sores) in the mucosa of the large intestine (colon) or rectum. UC and Crohn’s disease both involve chronic inflammation of the intestines and classify as IBD. It is estimated that approximately 12.6 million people worldwide have IBD.

Symptoms

When the disease is active, symptoms may include:5,6

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Nausea or loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Diarrhea (often with abdominal pain, presence of blood, pus or mucus)
- Joint pain/soreness
- Eye irritation
- Rash
- Sores in the mouth

When UC is usually not a fatal disease, it is serious, and in some cases, may cause life-threatening complications, including an increased risk of colorectal cancer (CRC), toxic megacolon/bowel obstruction and need for a colectomy. UC patients are almost 2.5 percent more likely to develop CRC than those without UC.

When the disease is inactive, symptoms may include:5,6

- No symptoms
- Mild symptoms

Effect on Quality of Life

Living with UC may severely affect quality of life, particularly during flares and remissions.

Physical hurdles may include:9

- Pain, fatigue or discomfort from disease symptoms
- Surgery, including placement of an ostomy bag or removal of the colon and rectum
- Frequent need to use the restroom

Socio-psychological hurdles may include:9

- Stress, anxiety and/or depression related to the uncertain nature of disease, including flare timing or ability to locate restroom
- Social isolation or perceived stigma surrounding bowel-related symptoms
- Poor body image

UC can also place a financial burden on patients and impact their ability to work.

Diagnosis & Treatment

There is no single test to identify a patient who might have UC, nor is there a known cause – many physicians believe there may be genetic, environmental or immune-related origins.

Typically, physicians will conduct a number of tests, including:5

- Blood test
- Colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy, with biopsies
- Stool sample
- Imaging tests, such as a computed tomography (CT) scan

There are treatment options available that can help manage flares and keep patients in remission, including:3

- 5-aminosalicylates
- Corticosteroids
- Immunosuppressants
- Small Molecule Therapies
- Biologics
- Surgery

Bristol Myers Squibb is committed to identifying and pursuing new treatment options to help deliver transformational medicines for patients with UC and other immune-mediated diseases.

References