

Speaking The Same Language

Before you speak with your doctor, it can be helpful to review some medical terms and definitions you may need when discussing your ulcerative colitis (UC). Use this glossary tool as a handy reference as you prepare for your next appointment.

Anemia

It's a condition where the body has fewer red blood cells than normal, which may result in fatigue, shortness of breath, dizziness, headache, and irregular heartbeat.

Colonoscopy

A colonoscopy is an exam where your gastroenterologist uses a thin, flexible, lighted tube with an attached camera to view your colon, and possibly to take tissue samples.

Gastrointestinal Bleeding

Bleeding in any part of the gastrointestinal tract.

Mucosa

Mucosa is the innermost layer of the GI tract. Mucosal surfaces are areas in the body where absorption happens. The inflammation of ulcerative colitis is typically limited to the colonic mucosa.

Remission

Remission is a time when your UC symptoms are under control or you are experiencing few to no symptoms.

Bowel Urgency

Strong urge to have a bowel movement.

Flare

An ulcerative colitis flare, or flare-up, is the return of UC symptoms after a period of remission. Flares can involve diarrhea, abdominal pain and cramping, rectal pain and bleeding, fatigue, and urgent bowel movements.

Gastrointestinal Tract (GI Tract)

The large, muscular tube that extends from the mouth to the anus, where the movement of muscles and the release of hormones and enzymes help with the digestion of food. Also called the digestive tract.

Rectal Bleeding

Rectal bleeding can refer to any blood that passes from your anus.

Rectum

The last several inches of the large intestine closest to the anus.

Stool Frequency

The normal length of time between bowel movements ranges widely depending on the person, and may also be affected by the severity of an underlying medical condition.

Colon

The colon, or large bowel, is a tube-like organ connected to the small intestine at one end and the anus at the other. The colon removes water, and some nutrients and electrolytes, from partially digested food.

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

This is a procedure where your gastroenterologist uses a slender, flexible, lighted tube to examine the rectum and the last portion of your colon. It's sometimes performed in place of a full colonoscopy.

Inflammation

Irritation or swelling. In UC, the symptoms a person experiences can vary, depending on how severe the inflammation is and where it occurs in the intestine.

Tenesmus

Tenesmus is the feeling of needing to pass stool even when the bowels are empty.

Ulcer

A sore on the skin's surface or on the stomach or intestinal lining.

NEXT STEPS: Use these terms to help inform your next conversation with your doctor

