

Ulcerative Colitis – Fact Sheet

Ulcerative Colitis (UC) is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease that results in the ulceration of the colonic mucosa (particularly in the colon and rectum). UC often presents in people between the ages of 20-40 years, however can develop at any age. Common signs and symptoms include; urgency, diarrhoea, rectal bleeding, rectal mucus, weight loss, anorexia, fever, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting. The cause of UC is unknown; however altered immune system function is likely to be a leading cause. Essentially the body attacks its own body tissues through cell mediated responses to stimuli such as; food and 'good' bacteria. There are others theories that may explain why people develop this disease, these include:

- Family history
- Dysbiosis (overgrowth of bad bacteria and not enough good bacteria)
- Deficient mucin (mucin is a substance that repairs and protects and GIT lining)

Complications associated with UC can include; anal fissures, haemorrhoids and perirectal abscess. Regular colonoscopies are recommended as the risk of colon cancer increases after having UC for 10+ years.

Nutritional Considerations

- Reduce consumption of omega-6 rich foods (particularly vegetable oils and processed foods).
- Avoid lactose and fructose and other short chain carbohydrates as these foods have been shown to worsen symptoms.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, processed and refined foods as these foods are pro-inflammatory.
- Eat a diet rich in fresh vegetables (should be cooked), fruit and good quality proteins.
- Eat high antioxidant rich foods (rich/dark coloured fruits and vegetables) to reduce oxidative stress.
- Increase omega-3 rich foods (fish, walnuts, chia seeds and flaxseeds) to reduce inflammation.
- Wholegrains should be consumed if tolerated, however many patients can only tolerate 'white' grains.
- During an attack stick with mashed vegetables and soft foods until it passes.

Other Suggestions

- Add slippery elm, flaxseed or psyllium husk to meals and drinks to absorb excess water in the bowel and to soothe the GIT.
- Take probiotics to restore gut flora.
- Check stools daily for blood.
- Regular exercise and stress management can also help reduce flare ups and assist overall with the management of UC.

There are specific vitamins that can be beneficial for reducing inflammation, repairing the gastrointestinal track lining and promoting a healthy immune system.

Customised nutritional plans comprising of a specific food plan with the support of nutrient/herbal supplements can be very effective in the management of ulcerative colitis. If you require support please visit www.good4younutrition.com.au