

Ulcerative Colitis – Kids and Teens

What Else Do I Need To I Know About Ulcerative Colitis?

Delayed growth

As a growing child, your body needs important nutrients for healthy growth. You may find that you eat less with IBD because of pain and cramping. On top of this, your body may not be able to absorb food very well and may lose nutrients that you are able to eat. Some medicines may also interfere with normal growth. For all of these reasons, some children with IBD do not grow and develop as they normally would. Children with this problem also may look much younger than they actually are. In some young people, puberty may also be delayed. However, usually they are able to catch up with their friends eventually in height once their bodies get the nutrients they need.

Stress

There is no evidence that stress causes ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease. However, people with IBD sometimes feel increased stress in their lives from having to live with a chronic illness. Some people also say they have a flare when they are having a stressful event or situation. For people who find there is a connection between their stress level and a worsening of their symptoms, using relaxation techniques, such as slow breathing, and taking special care to eat well and get enough sleep, may help them feel better.

Travel tips

If you are planning to travel, consider asking your doctor for a letter outlining your medical condition, in case you need to get medical attention in another city or country. You might also consider asking your doctor to write down a brief plan for what to do if symptoms arise. Take a copy of the prescriptions for any medicines you bring with you, for customs or security inspections, or if they are lost. Also, be sure to bring your doctor's contact information with you, and research ahead to find out who to contact or where to go if you have any medical needs while you are travelling. Helpful travel information for some countries is available on the EFCCA website (<http://www.efcca.org>).

Diet

There is no evidence that ulcerative colitis is due to food allergies. As a growing child, you need to eat a healthy, balanced diet to maintain your weight and give your body nutrients. If certain foods seem to make your symptoms worse, you may want to try to remove those foods from your diet when you have a flare-up. Keeping a food diary could help you identify which foods to avoid. Some people find that foods with high fibre content (eg, fruits, vegetables, nuts and wholemeal grains) make their symptoms worse, whereas other people find it helps to avoid spicy foods or fatty foods.

If removing a food from your diet doesn't seem to help, then bring it back into your usual diet so you continue to get balanced nutrition from a variety of foods.

Some people with ulcerative colitis may need to take iron supplements for anaemia (a low red blood cell count) due to blood loss. Blood tests can help confirm whether you need this.

It is best to discuss any questions you may have about diet and your condition with your doctor and he or she may suggest that you see a nutritionist for additional guidance.

For more tips and resources to help you manage your IBD, please see [Developing Your Management Plan](#).

For more advice on managing stress, diet and travelling, please see [Achieving more with IBD](#).