

# Natural Help 4...

## Colitis



### What is Colitis?

**Colitis** refers to the acute or chronic inflammation **of the membrane lining of the colon** (large intestine or bowel) and can have many different causes. It is also the commonly used short name for ulcerative **colitis**, a condition which causes **inflammation and ulcers** in the top layers of the lining of the large intestine.

When inflammation occurs, the colon empties itself, frequently resulting in diarrhea. In areas where the **inflammation has killed the colon** lining cells, ulcers may develop which can then produce pus and mucus, or may also bleed.

People with inflammatory bowel disease also experience eye problems, joint problems, neck or lower back pain, as well as skin changes.

### Diagnosing Colitis

The **diagnosis of colitis** is based on an examination of your abdomen and other body systems. Your physician may perform a rectal examination to check for blood in the stool as well as any other rectal changes before moving on to more extensive investigations.

Common laboratory and imaging tests performed include:

- X-rays of the colon
- Stool sample
- Stool culture
- Blood culture
- Barium enema
- Ultrasound and CT scanning
- Sigmoidoscopy
- Colonoscopy

### Various Types of Colitis

- Ulcerative colitis
- Crohn's colitis
- Diversion colitis
- Ischemic colitis
- Infectious colitis
- Fulminant colitis
- Chemical colitis
- Microscopic colitis
- Pseudomembranous colitis

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It is not intended to diagnose or treat any medical condition. Nothing in this ebook is intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this ebook or on ANY website.

# Symptoms and Signs of Colitis

People may experience a wide range of symptoms **depending on the specific type of colitis and its cause**. These may include:

- Pain
- Lower abdominal discomfort or cramps
- Spasms
- Tenderness in the abdomen
- Diarrhea
- Anemia
- Frequent loose bowel movements with or without blood
- Urgency and bowel incontinence
- Fever
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Swelling of the colon tissue
- Erythema (redness) of the surface of the colon
- Rectal bleeding
- Weight loss in chronic diarrhea and inflammatory bowel disease

## What Causes Colitis?

While cases of infective or chemical colitis usually have an identifiable cause, many of the other common causes of colitis do not have a clearly established etiology or cause. Researchers believe that the body's immune system reacts to a virus or bacteria in a way which causes **continuous inflammation in the intestinal wall**.

## Factors that Contribute to the Cause of Colitis

While some cases of colitis are more acute and resolve with prompt and correct treatment, the inflammation can be chronic in certain conditions, most notably Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. The causes of both of these disorders are unknown, but certain features have suggested several contributing factors:

- **Familial:** Both conditions are more common in first-degree relatives than in the general population.
- **Genetic:** There is a high similarity of symptoms and increased incidence among identical twins, particularly those with Crohn's disease.

## Causes of colitis

- **Various bugs may cause colitis** such as bacteria (Salmonella, Shigella species, Campylobacter jejuni and Clostridium) commonly found in food or in contaminated water.
- **Viruses such as the rotavirus or Norwalk virus** can disturb fluid absorption and damage the mucus membrane lining the intestine.
- **Protozoa such as Entamoeba histolytica** may cause acute severe dysentery or chronic mild bowel movements, or there may be no symptoms at all.
- **Colitis due to E. histolytica**, also known as amebiasis, has become an



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## Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

increasingly prevalent infectious cause.

- **Radiation-associated colitis:** Localized areas of [colitis](#) may occur after treatment of the pelvic or abdominal region with radiotherapy at various periods.
- **Irritable bowel syndrome:** This is a common disorder of the intestine that leads to cramps, excessive production of gas, [bloating](#), and changes in bowel habits. The cause of irritable bowel syndrome is unknown.
- **Ischemic colitis:** The mechanism of ischemia—massive decrease in the blood supply to the bowel—is not always known, but shunting of blood away from the mucosa is an important contributing factor. This disease often affects the elderly, the severely ill, or others with circulatory disorders.
- **Antibiotic-associated colitis:** This condition usually occurs in people receiving large dose antibiotics, especially after gastrointestinal surgery.
- **Infectious agents or environmental toxins:** No single agent has consistently been associated with either form of inflammatory bowel disease. Viruses have been reported in tissue from people with inflammatory bowel disease, but there is no compelling evidence.
- **Immune defense mechanisms:** Several alterations in immune regulation have been identified in inflammatory bowel disease. However, none of these findings have been specific for either ulcerative [colitis](#) or Crohn's disease.
- **Smoking:** Smokers increase their risk of developing Crohn's disease, and smoking is often a contributing factor in Crohn's disease
- **Psychological factors:** There is little evidence relating possible emotional factors as a cause of inflammatory bowel disease. Psychological factors may change the course of the disease, as well as your response to therapy.

## Help for Colitis

The [treatment of colitis](#) generally depends on the cause and the severity of the condition. In mild cases of diarrhea, drink lots of clear fluids like water, tea, lemonade or soup. Anti-diarrhea agents may be recommended to **reduce the number of bowel movements** and relieve rectal urgency.

For more **serious episodes of colitis**, antibiotics, anti-inflammatory medication, or steroids may be prescribed. However, these prescription medications may also come with other side effects. As your symptoms improve, eat low-fiber foods and avoid dairy products and greasy foods for a few days.

Often severe attacks of inflammatory bowel disease require hospital admission and supportive care which includes bowel rest, IV fluids, and **correction of any electrolyte imbalance**. Surgery may also be required and can involve the removal of the affected portion of colon and bowel, but is usually a last resort.

Making strict **changes to your diet will help to ease symptoms** and keeping a food diary will enable you to identify foods that seem to worsen or trigger your symptoms. People with [chronic colitis](#) may need psychotherapy, counseling, and education. These types of treatments will help you and your family to control and manage the disease better.

## Natural Remedies

Natural treatments can provide an effective, gentle alternative to conventional

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medicine, without the side effects commonly associated with prescription drugs. For a balanced approach, use a combination of therapeutic herbs to **improve digestive health** and reduce symptoms.

A medicinal herb called Matricaria recutita (German Chamomile) acts as an **anti-inflammatory with anti-spasmodic** and calming properties. Filipendula ulmaria (Meadowsweet) is also an anti-inflammatory, and helps to protect the digestive tract and reduce stomach acid secretions. Other effective herbs include Ulmus fulva and Slippery Elm, which **reduce digestive pain and irritation**. Sutherlandia frutescens has been used for thousands of years by the indigenous people of South Africa to treat chronic and acute digestive complaints.

## Tips to Prevent Colitis

There are some helpful ways to prevent the onset of [colitis](#) and they include:

- **Practice proper hygiene** and sanitation measures, especially where [colitis](#) may be associated with infectious agents
- **Change your diet** by including more fiber, fruit, vegetables, nuts and raisins
- **Reduce your intake** of lactose products and wheat
- **Reduce your intake** of red meat – combined with starches, it is a major source of constipation
- **Drink lots of water** to rid the body of any impurities
- **Exercise regularly**
- **Avoid coffee and caffeine-containing** drinks
- **Avoid spicy foods**
- **Include yogurt into your diet**, as it contains friendly bacteria that help stool to flow easily through the colon
- **Avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory** drugs (NSAIDs), oral contraceptives, and slow-release potassium tablets if you have an inflammatory bowel disease – these drugs have the potential to worsen the disease
- **Reduce** your intake of alcohol
- **Try to quit smoking** in a natural manner
- **Increase your intake** of fat-soluble vitamins
- **Educate yourself** and your family about the disease

## The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is ‘better’ than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play



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Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called 'alternative' or 'complimentary' medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term 'holistic' medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are 'unproven' and 'untested', the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by

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producing so-called 'standardized' extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While 'standardized' extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don't make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

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