

The "Silent" Inflammation

How Ulcerative Colitis Affects the Indian Gut

Doctor, it's just heat (garmi) or maybe something I ate at the wedding last night."

As a gastroenterologist in India, I hear this daily. In our culture, we are quick to blame "gas," "indigestion," or "spicy food" for our bathroom troubles. But what if the frequent trips to the toilet and the sight of blood aren't just a temporary upset? What if it is a silent fire burning inside your colon? This is Ulcerative Colitis (UC).

What is Ulcerative Colitis?

Ulcerative Colitis is a type of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). Unlike a simple infection that comes and goes, UC is a chronic condition where your immune system mistakenly attacks the lining of your large intestine (colon). This creates sores, or ulcers, that bleed and produce mucus.

The "Indian" Challenge

For decades, we thought IBD was a Western problem. Today, India is seeing an explosion in cases. Why? Our changing urban lifestyles, increased consumption of processed "junk" foods, and perhaps even our improved hygiene are altering our gut bacteria.

The biggest hurdle in India is misdiagnosis. Because the symptoms—cramps, urgency, and bloody stools—mimic



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common infections like amoebiasis or even piles (hemorrhoids), many patients spend months taking unnecessary antibiotics or "home remedies" while the inflammation causes permanent damage.

Unveiling the Myths

◆ **Myth:** "It's caused by eating too much chili." **Reality:** While spicy

food can irritate a flare-up, it does not cause UC. This is an autoimmune condition, not a culinary one.

◆ **Myth:** "It's contagious."

Reality: You cannot "catch" UC from someone else. It is a deeply personal battle between your immune system and your gut.

◆ **Myth:** "You can never lead a normal life."

Reality: With modern medications like biologics and proper monitoring, most patients achieve remission—a state where they can work, travel, and eat almost normally.

The Takeaway

If you have been noticing blood in your stool or a persistent change in bowel habits for more than four weeks, stop self-medicating with antacids. A simple colonoscopy can provide the clarity you need. Early intervention is the difference between a life of hospital visits and a life of freedom. Your gut is talking—it's time you listened.