Ulcerative colitis — what is it?

- Ulcerative colitis is one of two conditions collectively known as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). The other is Crohn’s disease.

- It is a chronic (persistent) disease that causes inflammation of the large intestine only; never the small intestine.

- Ulcerative colitis affects the inner lining (mucosa) of the colon and/or rectum (back passage). The inflammation causes redness, swelling and pain.

- In severe cases, small ulcers develop, which may bleed and produce pus.

- People with ulcerative colitis pass frequent loose stools, which may contain blood and mucus. The disease may also cause abdominal cramps, arthritis in the back and the large joints, inflamed eyes, skin rashes and inflammation of the biliary tract and liver.