

Ulcerative colitis: effect on fertility and pregnancy

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Ulcerative colitis is one of the most interesting nosological entities of gastroenterology and internal medicine. This chronic autoimmune disorder of the digestive system, along with Crohn's disease, is a type of idiopathic inflammatory bowel disease. It mainly affects people during their peak reproductive age, i.e., 15 to 30 years old. It is characterized by diffuse mucosal inflammation of the large intestine, which is limited to the colon and shows alternating periods of exacerbations and remissions.

Purpose: To review the world literature regarding the impact of the disease on fertility, the course of pregnancy, and consecutively, the outcome of pregnancy.

Materials and methods: An extensive review of the recent national and international literature in electronic databases (Pubmed, Google Scholar) and

in scientific journals was accomplished through the use of appropriate keywords.

Results: The majority of women will have a chance of conceiving. For about 25% of them, conception will be achieved in the course of the disease and it will progress normally, resulting in a healthy fetal outcome. Infertility only occurs among men while they are taking medicines, whereas among women it occurs after surgery for ileoanal anastomosis. During periods of flare-ups, there is a possibility of spontaneous abortion, premature labor and birth of an infant with low birth weight. The majority of pharmaceutical formulations can be used safely both before and after pregnancy without causing any birth defects.

Key words: Ulcerative colitis, inflammatory bowel disease, pregnancy, fertility, reproduction
