

## Ulcerative Colitis Graham, Cumbria



Graham is a 47-year-old father of two who first started to experience symptoms of Ulcerative Colitis in 1995, when his heavy physical work as a steel worker proved to be too much. Rectal bleeding caused him to see his GP and he was referred to hospital where he was treated for piles. However, after further heavy bleeding and diarrhoea, Graham had a full examination of his colon (large intestine) and biopsies. At that point he was diagnosed with Ulcerative Colitis affecting the whole colon and needed to be hospitalised to bring his disease under control. He had problems with medication resulting in further frequent hospital visits due to disease flare-ups. This caused Graham difficulties at work.

Luckily Graham's occupational company doctor suggested that he re-train. He is now working in the office-based Finance and Commercial department, which suits his health much better.

Ulcerative Colitis leads to a sudden urgent need to go to the toilet, especially during a flare-up of the disease. Graham feels strongly that sufferers should be able to ask for direct access to toilets in shops. He was unfortunate enough to need a toilet urgently while in his local pharmacy picking up a prescription. Despite having a NACC Can't Wait Card, the pharmacy assistant needed to check with her manager to allow Graham to use their staff toilets. This defeated the object of having the Card, since it was too late. Graham's experience of other shops being quicker and more helpful to offer their toilet facilities is heartening.

Depression can arise from living with Ulcerative Colitis and Graham certainly found this to be the case. He decided to take matters into his own hands and started swimming twice a week. He pumped up the tyres of his bike and is now a regular cyclist. At his last colonoscopy in November 2008, the gastroenterologists found that his colitis was well in remission.

### Messages:

- Ulcerative Colitis is characterised by bloody diarrhoea, with episodes of relapse and periods of remission. It is not contagious
- The urgency associated with Ulcerative Colitis is one of the most embarrassing symptoms
- NACC helps people in practical ways and offers support in coping with the distressing aspects of the disease
- A thoughtful and understanding employer also helps.