

Guide To Understanding Diverticular Disease



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Diverticular disease can be diagnosed as diverticulitis or diverticulosis.

WHAT IS DIVERTICULOSIS?

Diverticulosis is a common condition diagnosed when small pouches called “diverticula” are found in the wall of the colon. Diverticula are caused when pressure such as that caused by constipation, builds up inside the intestine and makes the intestinal wall bulge out in spots where the wall may be weak. Usually there are no symptoms. However, occasionally mild pain or cramping may occur, commonly on the left side of the abdomen. These symptoms or any significant changes in bowel habits should be reported to your physician.

IS DIVERTICULOSIS SERIOUS?

Not usually. Most patients that have diverticulitis do not have any symptoms. The diverticula that form in the wall of the colon do not usually cause any problems and can only be detected by a medical examination.

WHAT IS DIVERTICULITIS?

Diverticulitis occurs when one or more of the diverticula become inflamed or infected. Symptoms can include pain and tenderness, severe at times, most commonly on the lower left side of the abdomen, a change in bowel function (constipation or diarrhea), fever or blood in the stool. If left untreated, this can have serious implications.

IS DIVERTICULITIS SERIOUS?

Generally diverticulitis can be treated with antibiotics and a low fibre diet. In more serious cases surgery may be required. If any of these symptoms or any other significant change in your bowel habits occur, you should be seen by your physician directly.

HOW DO I TREAT DIVERTICULAR DISEASE?

The key to managing diverticular disease is avoiding constipation. First, evaluate your diet. Ensuring a high level of fibre is important to maintain bowel regularity. You should also try to eliminate some foods and beverages that can constipate you, like fatty foods. Second, ensure you are drinking 8 glasses of water or other fluids each day. Third, you should exercise for 15-30 minutes 3 times per week. Additionally, try to develop good bowel habits, by getting into a routine and ensuring you have plenty of quiet time to spend in the bathroom. If symptoms flare up consult your doctor.

AM I ALONE?

About half of all Americans aged 60 to 80 years and almost everyone over 80 years has diverticulitis.



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