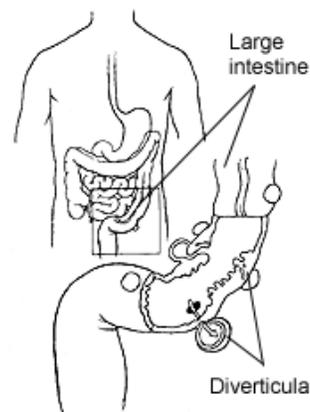


Diverticulitis

What is diverticulitis?

Diverticulitis occurs when you have weak areas or pouches in the wall of your large intestine and the pouches become inflamed. These pouches are called diverticula. They look somewhat like small thumbs poking out of the side of the bowel. They most commonly occur in the colon. The presence of diverticula in the colon is called diverticulosis. You are more likely to have these pouches as you get older.

Diverticulitis



How does it occur?

Inflammation occurs when diverticula become blocked with stool. Occasionally, when the inflammation is severe, a hole (perforation) may form in the wall of the intestine. Rarely, perforation may lead to peritonitis, which is inflammation of the lining of the abdomen, a potentially serious condition.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of diverticulitis may include:

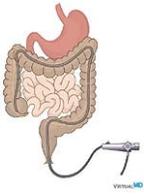
- alternating diarrhea and constipation
- severe, intermittent cramps in the lower left side of the abdomen
- tenderness in the lower left side of the abdomen
- chills or fever
- nausea and vomiting
- rectal bleeding.

How is it diagnosed?

The health care provider will review your symptoms and examine you. He or she may ask you to have the following procedures:

- sigmoidoscopy (exam of the rectum and lower end of the large intestine with a lighted viewing instrument)





colonoscopy or barium enema (other procedures used to examine the intestines and colon)
blood tests.

How is it treated?

For uncomplicated diverticulosis, your health care provider may recommend a high-fiber diet and possibly use of stool softeners.



For an attack of acute diverticulitis, you will probably be hospitalized. Your treatment will include antibiotics, intravenous fluids, and nasogastric suction (a procedure that relieves pressure in the intestine).



In most cases requiring surgery, the diseased section of the intestine is removed and the remaining sections are joined together. Some people may need a temporary colostomy. A colostomy is an operation to attach part of the large intestine (colon) to an opening in the wall of the abdomen. Your bowel movements then pass through this opening instead of your rectum and are collected in a bag outside the body.

How long will the effects last?

Diverticulitis is usually mild and should respond well to antibiotics and changes in diet.

How can I take care of myself?

Use a source of heat such as a hot water bottle for cramps.



If you have diarrhea, drink liquids and avoid solid foods. Try to rest until the diarrhea stops. When your symptoms are gone, eat bland, low-fiber foods at first. Your health care provider will let you know when you should gradually begin eating a high-fiber diet.



Take all the medicine prescribed by your health care provider. If you stop taking antibiotics when your symptoms are gone but before the scheduled end of treatment, the symptoms may return.

If your symptoms worsen, contact your health care provider.

How can I help prevent recurrence of diverticulitis?

Follow your health care provider's prescribed treatments for diverticulitis and diverticulosis.



Eat regular, nutritious meals containing high-fiber foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods. Fiber supplements, such as bran powder or psyllium are also helpful.

Drink plenty of water, as much as 8 glasses a day.



Watch for changes in bowel movements (from constipation to diarrhea).



Get enough rest and sleep.

Do not eat indigestible seeds such as popcorn kernels. Avoid other foods that may get stuck in diverticula, such as raisins, whole-kernel corn, and peanuts.



Contact your health care provider if symptoms return.

Developed by McKesson Clinical Reference Systems.

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.