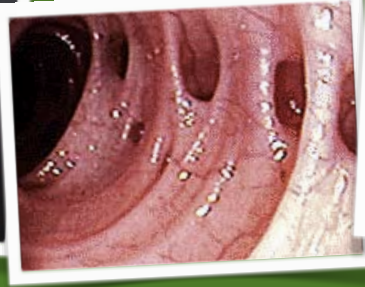
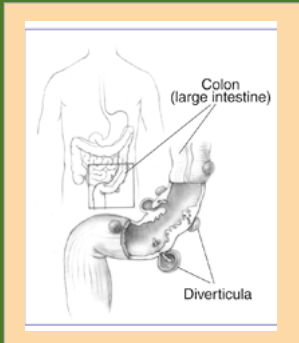


# Diverticulosis

HUNGRY FOR HEALTH

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## What is Diverticulosis?

Small pouches that line the colon or large intestine and bulge outward are known as diverticula. One single pouch is called a diverticulum. The condition of having diverticula is called diverticulosis. Diverticulosis is most common in the sigmoid colon, which is the lower portion of the small intestine. 10-20% of people with diverticulosis get diverticulitis. Together, the two are known as diverticular disease.

**Diverticulosis** Many people with diverticulosis do not have any discomfort or symptoms. However, some people may experience crampy pain or discomfort in the lower abdomen, bloating, and constipation. These symptoms are similar to irritable bowel syndrome and stomach ulcers as well.

**Diverticulitis** The most common symptom of diverticulitis is abdominal pain. When examined, the lower left side of the abdomen is tender. The pain is severe and comes on suddenly, and can become worse over a period of a few days. The intensity of the pain over this period can fluctuate, and be accompanied with

cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever, chills, or a change in bowel habits.

**Causes of Diverticular disease** There is no proven cause for diverticular disease. However, the dominant theory is that a low-fiber diet causes diverticular disease. This is a major problem for Americans today because the Standard American diet includes so many processed foods, each of which are low in fiber.

Fiber is the part of fruits, vegetables, and grains that the body cannot digest. Some fiber, called soluble fiber, dissolves easily in water. It takes on a soft, jelly-like texture in the intestines. Insoluble fiber passes almost unchanged through the intestines. Both kinds of fiber help prevent constipation by making stools soft and easy to pass. With a low-fiber diet, there is a high risk of constipation (or hard stool), which may cause people to strain when passing stool during a bowel movement. Straining may cause increased pressure in the colon, which may cause the colon lining to bulge out through weak spots in the colon wall. These bulges are diverticula.

Other contributors to the disease may include a lack of exercise and inflammation.

**Diagnosis** Diverticular disease is diagnosed with detailed medical history, a

physical exam (digital rectal exam), and diagnostic tests. Diverticulosis is often found during a colonoscopy done to screen for cancer or polyps or to evaluate complaints of pain or rectal bleeding. Medical history may include questions about bowel habits, pain, other symptoms, diet, and medication. If diverticulosis is suspected, an Abdominal ultrasound or Computerized tomography (CT) scan. The abdominal ultrasound is sound waves sent toward the colon through a handheld device, making electrical impulses that create a picture (sonogram) on a video monitor. If the diverticula are inflamed, the sound waves will bound off of them, showing their location. The CT scan is a noninvasive x-ray that produces cross-section images of the body. The doctor inserts a dye into a vein and the person may be given a similar mixture to swallow. The dye helps to show complications of diverticulitis such as perforations and abscesses.

**Treatment** Increasing the amount of fiber in the diet may reduce symptoms and prevent further complications. Chewing all food thoroughly can prevent food from getting stuck in the diverticulum. Clearing up infection and inflammation, and resting the colon is important for minimizing complications. Finally, drinking water helps with bowel movement.

**DIVERTICULOSIS**

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# HIGH FIBER FOODS

whole grain bread

beans (navy, kidney, black)



whole grain cereal

apple with the skin



pear with the skin

raspberries



prunes

squash



green peas

sweet potato or potato with the skin

cauliflower



mixed vegetables

spinach



turnip greens

## The importance of Probiotics

Probiotics, or “good bacteria” can help crowd out the bad bacteria in the colon. This helps prevent further complications and further growth of the diverticulum. Probiotics can be taken in pill form, but may also be found in active culture yogurt, which is easily found in the grocery store. Probiotics should be supported with 5-9 vegetables and fruits per day.

Wouldn't it be nice to enjoy your meal without worrying about diverticulosis?



## Your health is in Your hands

Taking control of your diet by adding high fiber foods, eating a whole foods diet, eliminating processed foods, cutting down on refined sugar and carbohydrates, and eating a lot of fruits and vegetables will help your diverticulosis significantly. You will see the following benefits:

eliminate bloating and cramps

reduce the possibility of diverticulitis disease

end constipation (often caused by medications)

get off pain medication and antibiotics

avoid hospitalizations, irreversible surgery and possible colostomy

Prevent the agony of fistulas, peritonitis and intestinal blockage

## Are there further complications?

If the symptoms of diverticulitis are frequent, or the patient does not respond well to antibiotics and resting the colon, the doctor may advise surgery. The surgeon removes the affected part of the colon and joins the remaining sections. This type of surgery, called a colon resection, aims to prevent complications and future diverticulitis.

Diverticulosis may lead to further complications. Those complications can include the following:

- Rectal bleeding caused by bursts in small blood vessels in the diverticulum. In this

case, a colonoscopy can be used to identify the site of bleeding and to be treated.

- Infection which can lead to abscess, a localized collection of pus, or peritonitis, a perforation that leaks pus. This requires immediate surgery.
- Fistula, an abnormal connection of tissue between two organs, or an organ and the skin. When damaged tissue come into contact with each other during infection, they can stick together. If they heal this way, a fistula can form.
- Scarring caused by infection may lead to partial intestinal obstruction, making it more difficult to pass bowel movements.