

What Is Diverticulitis/Diverticulosis?

Diverticula are pockets that grow in the colon wall. These pockets are often in the left (sigmoid) colon but can be present throughout the rest of the colon. **Diverticulosis** is when these pockets are present in a person's colon. **Diverticulitis** is when these pockets cause inflammation (swelling) or problems in the colon.

How do I know if I have Diverticulitis/Diverticulosis?

Diverticulosis usually does not cause any pain or symptoms. The number of symptoms depends on the amount of inflammation. Symptoms include:

- Pain in the abdomen (stomach).
 - Chills.
 - Fever (temperature greater than 101).
 - Change in bowel habits.
 - Blockage of colon.
 - Perforation (a hole in the stomach).
 - Abscess or fistula formation (an abnormal connection between the colon and another organ or the skin, especially bladder).
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What causes Diverticulitis/Diverticulosis?

The cause of diverticulosis and diverticulitis is unknown, but is more common in people with a low fiber diet. It is thought that a low-fiber diet increases colon pressure that makes pockets (diverticula) grow.

How can I fix it?

Diverticulosis:

- Diet Changes – the doctor will recommend the best diet for each patient's case to help stop progression.

Diverticulitis:

The treatment of diverticulitis will rely on the amount of inflammation in the intestines and colon, and the patient's history.

Mild cases are usually cared for with oral antibiotics and dietary restrictions.

More serious cases need the patient to stay in the hospital with intravenous antibiotics and dietary restraints. This allows the bowel to rest and heal.

Complications of diverticulitis such as abscess formation may need additional interventions.

When is surgery needed?

Surgery is used for patients with repeated episodes (attacks) of diverticulitis, problems or serious attacks when there's little or no response to medicine. Surgery is also needed in cases where there is harmful bleeding from diverticulosis or if a patient has repeated episodes of bleeding.

The most common surgery for diverticulitis is a ***partial colectomy***. A ***colectomy*** is when the diseased (bad) part of the colon (most commonly the left side of the colon is removed. The remaining part of the colon is ***anastomosed*** (joined) to the rectum.

Complete recovery can be expected from surgery. Normal bowel function is expected after surgery. In emergency surgeries, patients may need a temporary colostomy (an opening in the belly for getting rid of wastes). Patients are encouraged to see a doctor for abdominal (stomach) pains early to help avoid problems.

How can I learn more?

You can also find information through the American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons (ASCRS) at <http://www.fascrs.org/patients/conditions/>

Do you have any questions or comments for your doctor?
