



Diverticulosis & Diverticulitis

Sometimes small pouches bulge outward through weak spots in the colon. This is called **diverticulosis**. The pockets (called diverticula) can fill with intestinal waste. With **diverticulitis**, these pockets and areas around them get inflamed or infected.

Signs & Symptoms

For Diverticulosis

Often this has no symptoms. Some persons may have:

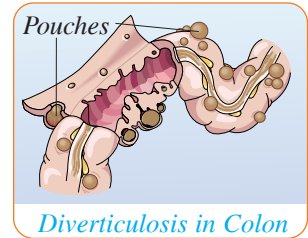
- Mild cramps.
- Bloating
- Constipation.
- Blood in the stool.

For Diverticulitis

- Severe cramping and bloating in the abdomen, usually on the lower left side. The pain is made worse with a bowel movement.
- Tenderness over the abdomen.
- Nausea.
- Fever.

Causes

A low fiber diet is thought to be the main cause. Constipation and overuse of laxatives may also play a role.



Treatment

Diverticulitis needs medical treatment. *Diverticulosis* can't be cured, but self-care measures can reduce symptoms and prevent serious problems.

Questions to Ask

Do you have any of these problems?

- Very severe abdominal pain.
- **Signs of an intestinal obstruction:** Inability to pass stool or even gas; mild fever and weakness; abdominal cramps that come and go; the abdomen gets more and more swollen with increasing pain; hiccups that don't stop; and vomiting.
- Blood in the stool, tarlike, or maroon-colored stool.



NO

Do you have any of these problems?

- Changes in bowel habits last longer than 2 weeks.
- Tenderness, pain, mild cramping, or a bloated feeling. These are usually felt in the lower left side of the abdomen.
- Gas. Nausea. Constipation.
- Pain in the abdomen and a fever. (See Fever at www.HealthyLearn.com.)



NO



Self-Care / Prevention

- Get regular exercise. Drink 1½ to 2 quarts of water daily. Eat a diet high in fiber, but avoid foods that bother you (e.g., corn, nuts, etc.).
- Avoid the regular use of “stimulant” laxatives, such as Ex-Lax. Ask your doctor about taking bulk-forming laxatives like Metamucil.
- Try not to strain when you have bowel movements.