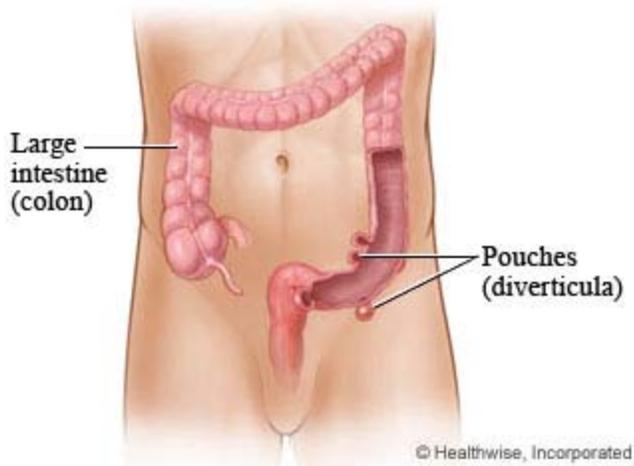


Learning About Diverticulosis and Diverticulitis

What are diverticulosis and diverticulitis?



In diverticulosis and diverticulitis, pouches called diverticula form in the wall of the large intestine, or colon.

- **In diverticulosis**, the pouches do not cause any pain or other symptoms.
- **In diverticulitis**, the pouches become inflamed or infected and cause symptoms.

Doctors aren't sure what causes diverticula in the colon. But they think that a low-fiber diet may play a role. Without fiber to add bulk to the stool, the colon has to work harder than normal to push the stool forward. The pressure from this may cause pouches to form in weak spots along the colon.

Some people with diverticulosis get diverticulitis. But experts don't know why this happens.

What are the symptoms?

- **In diverticulosis**, most people don't have symptoms. You may have had diverticulosis for years by the time symptoms occur (if they do). But pouches sometimes bleed.
- **In diverticulitis**, symptoms may last from a few hours to a week or more. They include:
 - Belly pain, usually in the lower left side, that is sometimes worse when you move. This is the most common symptom.
 - Fever and chills.
 - Bloating and gas.
 - Diarrhea or constipation.
 - Nausea and sometimes vomiting.
 - Not feeling like eating.

How can you prevent these problems?

You may be able to help reduce the formation of new pouches and lower the chance of getting diverticulitis by taking steps to prevent constipation.

- Eat fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains every day. These foods are high in fiber.
- Drink plenty of fluids (enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water). If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.

- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.
- Take a fiber supplement, such as Citrucel or Metamucil, every day if needed. Start with a small dose and very slowly increase the dose over a month or more.
- Schedule time each day for a bowel movement. Having a daily routine may help. Take your time and do not strain when having a bowel movement.

Although some people avoid nuts, seeds, berries, and popcorn, believing that these foods might get trapped in the diverticula and cause pain, there is no evidence that they cause diverticulitis or make it worse.

How are these problems treated?

- The best way to treat diverticulosis is to avoid constipation. (See the tips above.)
- Treatment for diverticulitis includes antibiotics and often a change in your diet. You may need only liquids at first and return to solid foods when you feel better. Your doctor may suggest pain medicines for pain or belly cramps. In some cases, surgery may be needed.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to www.southdenvergi.com, log into the web portal, and enter E426 in the search box to learn more about Learning About Diverticulosis and Diverticulitis.

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