

PATIENT'S GUIDE TO DIVERTICULITIS

WHAT IS DIVERTICULITIS?

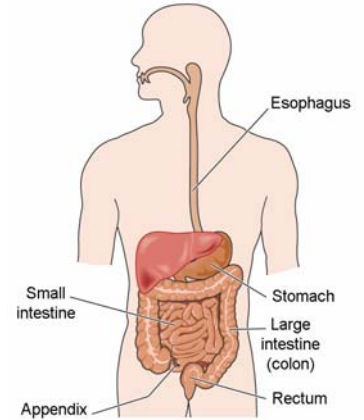
Diverticulitis is a common disease of the large intestine, which is part of your bowel. Diverticulitis is characterized by a protrusion of the inner layers of the large intestine through the outer layers of the wall of the colon, forming a pouch or a diverticulum, these pouches can become inflamed or infected. If they do become inflamed or infected, it results in diverticulitis. Diverticulitis results from inflammation of a colonic diverticulum with or without a rupture of the diverticulum (perforation). An attack of diverticulitis can develop suddenly and without warning.

SYMPTOMS

People with diverticulitis may have many symptoms, the most common of which is pain in the lower left side of the abdomen. The pain is usually severe and comes on suddenly, though it can also be mild and then worsen over several days. The intensity of the pain can fluctuate.

Diverticulitis may also cause

- fevers and chills
- nausea or vomiting
- a change in bowel habits—constipation or diarrhea
- diverticular bleeding



TEST & DIAGNOSIS

Diverticulitis with mild symptoms and no complications usually requires a person to rest, take oral antibiotics, and be on a liquid diet for a period of time. If symptoms ease after a few days, the health care provider will recommend gradually adding solid foods back into the diet.

Severe cases of diverticulitis with acute pain and complications will likely require a hospital stay. Most cases of severe diverticulitis are treated with intravenous (IV) antibiotics and a few days without food or drink to help the colon rest.

TREATMENT

Treatment for diverticulitis depends on how bad your symptoms are. If the pain is mild, you are able to drink liquids, and you have no signs of complications, treatment may include:

- Medicines such as antibiotics and pain relievers.
- Changes in diet, starting with a clear-liquid or bland diet that is low in fiber until the pain goes away, then increasing the amount of fiber.

If the pain is severe, you are not able to drink liquids, or you have complications of diverticulitis, a hospital stay is needed. Treatment will include:

- Antibiotics given in a vein (intravenous, or IV).
- Intravenous fluids and nutrition only (no food or drink by mouth) for up to a week to allow the bowel to rest.

Treatment may also include:

- Keeping the stomach empty by sucking out the contents through a tube passed up the nose and down the throat into the stomach (nasogastric or NG tube). This may be needed if you are vomiting or have abdominal swelling.
- Doing surgery either for complications of diverticulitis or if you have had repeated attacks that are not helped by changing your diet. Overall, fewer than 6 out of 100 people who have diverticulitis need surgery.

Most cases of promptly treated diverticulitis will improve in 2 to 3 days. If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better.