

Diverticulosis and Diverticulitis

Diverticulosis

Diverticula are small pouches that bulge out from the wall of the intestine, especially in the lower part of the colon (the sigmoid colon). The presence of these pouches is called diverticulosis. Most of the time, they do not cause symptoms or problems and are found by chance. However, some people may have abdominal discomfort. When one or more diverticula become inflamed or infected, this condition is called diverticulitis.



Diverticulitis

Diverticulitis happens when one or more diverticula become inflamed or infected. This condition usually appears suddenly and can cause strong abdominal pain. In some cases, diverticulitis can lead to serious complications, such as abscesses, a perforation in the colon, or more severe infections.

What causes diverticulosis and diverticulitis?

The exact cause of diverticula forming or becoming inflamed is not fully known. However, researchers have identified several factors that may increase the risk of developing these conditions, including:

Genetics: Some genes may make a person more likely to develop diverticula or inflammation.

Lifestyle factors: Lack of physical activity, smoking, obesity, a diet low in fiber or high in red meat, and the use of certain medications (for example, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs).



Symptoms of diverticulosis and diverticulitis

Diverticulosis: Some people may have chronic symptoms such as constipation, bloating, gas, or diarrhea, although most people have no symptoms at all.

Diverticulitis

This condition can cause sudden symptoms such as fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain, usually on the lower left side of the abdomen.

If you or someone else has persistent symptoms or strong abdominal pain, it is important to see a healthcare professional for proper evaluation.

What problems can diverticulosis and diverticulitis cause?

Serious health problems (complications) can occur, although not everyone develops them. Diverticular bleeding happens when a small blood vessel inside the wall of a diverticulum breaks. This bleeding can be heavy.

In addition, people with diverticulitis may develop problems such as:

- **Fistula:** an abnormal opening between the colon and another part of the body.
- **Abscess:** a painful, swollen area filled with pus.
- **Peritonitis:** an infection of the lining of the abdominal cavity.



Diagnosis

To make a diagnosis, the doctor will review your medical history, perform a physical exam, and order tests if needed. These may include:

- Stool tests
- Blood tests
- Colonoscopy

Treatments

If diverticulosis is causing chronic symptoms, your doctor may recommend:

- Probiotics
- Antibiotics
- High fiber foods

Treatments for diverticulitis may include:

- **Clear liquid diet** (for a short time to let the colon rest)
- Antibiotics
- Pain medications
- Antispasmodic medications

Prevention

A doctor may recommend lifestyle changes to help prevent episodes of diverticulitis, such as:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Not smoking
- Doing at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week
- Eating a diet high in fiber and low in red meat



Social and Emotional Support

For recommendations, tools, and resources on how you and your family can cope with the emotional and physical concerns that arise during and after treatment, please visit your primary care physician or contact the following phone lines:

Medical Advice Line 1-844-347-7801
TTY/TDD 1-844-347-7804
APS Health 787-641-9133

References:

<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/diverticulosi-sanddiverticulitis.html>

<https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/professional/trastornos-gastrointestinales/enfermedad-diverticular/diverticulosis-col%C3%B3nica>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/diverticulitis-diet/art-20048499>

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