

Diverticulosis and Diverticulitis



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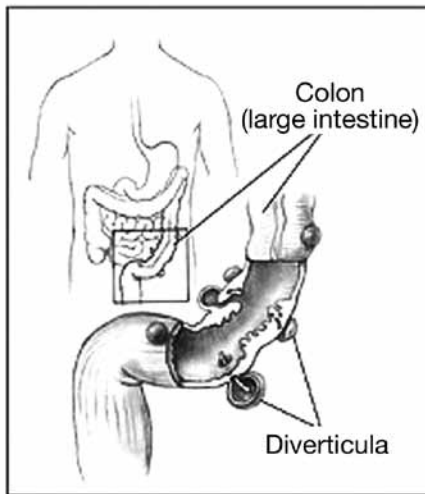
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What is diverticulosis?

Diverticulosis is the presence of multiple little pockets or sacs (referred to as diverticula) that protrude out from the wall of the colon. Although the diverticula can develop anywhere in the colon (also called the large intestine), they are most commonly found in the left lower portion of the colon, known as the sigmoid colon.



Who is at risk for diverticulosis?

Diverticula frequently develop in adults over the age of 40. By age 60 approximately 50% of American adults have diverticulosis.

Why does diverticulosis develop?

There are 'weak spots' in the wall of the colon which protrude out over time. Although not proven, it is thought that conditions such as chronic constipation may contribute to the development of the diverticula.

What symptoms do individuals with diverticulosis experience?

Fortunately, diverticulosis causes no symptoms for the majority of individuals who have it. Some may experience bloating or constipation.

What is diverticulitis?

Diverticulitis is the condition that occurs when diverticula become infected and inflamed. This may result in the development of increasing abdominal pain, fever and chills, and change in stools with mucus or blood present.

How is diverticulitis treated?

Most cases of diverticulitis can be treated with oral antibiotics. In more severe cases, the individual may require hospitalization with the administration of intravenous antibiotics. Complications of diverticulitis include stricture formation (or narrowing) in the colon or perforation with abscess formation. In these circumstances, surgical removal of the affected area may be required.

Can diverticulosis and diverticulitis be prevented?

A common misconception is that eating seeds or nuts causes the development of diverticulitis. However, there is no scientific evidence that seeds and nuts causes diverticulitis flares. Many believe that a high fiber diet and generous fluid intake will reduce the risk of development of diverticulosis or diverticulitis. Although this has not been proven, it does make sense, and may be beneficial.