Meckel's Diverticulum

A Meckel's diverticulum is a left over part of a duct that attaches to the small intestine. It failed to close normally. A Meckel's diverticulum is present from birth. It is found in about 2 percent of the population. The diverticulum is usually a small pouch 1 to 1.5 inches long. It is located on the small intestine towards the end where it connects to the large intestine (*colon*). The diverticulum may contain gastric mucosa. This means it may contain cells similar to cells in the stomach. These cells secrete acid. This acid may cause ulceration of the small bowel resulting in bleeding.

SYMPTOMS

- This may be found during surgery for another problem. No problems may have been present.
- A common finding is bleeding.
- The pouch may also become twisted to form a blockage, or an intussusception. An intussusception is a condition where the intestine telescopes inside itself. Both of these conditions cause abdominal pain. They must be treated with immediate surgery.

DIAGNOSIS

- When a Meckel's diverticulum is suspected, it may be confirmed with scans. These scans use radioactive tracer that is taken up by the gastric mucosa.
- If the origin of bleeding remains unclear, it may be necessary to do arteriography. This test is done by injecting dye into a blood vessel. This test finds the bleeding. If the origin of bleeding is still not found, it may be necessary to do exploratory surgery.

TREATMENT

The treatment of Meckel's diverticulum is almost always surgery. The diverticulum is removed, or a portion of the neighboring small intestine is also removed. Less often, if there is acute bleeding it may be possible to perform intra-arterial instillation of medications or material to block the bleeding from the artery. Your caregiver will discuss your options with you.

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