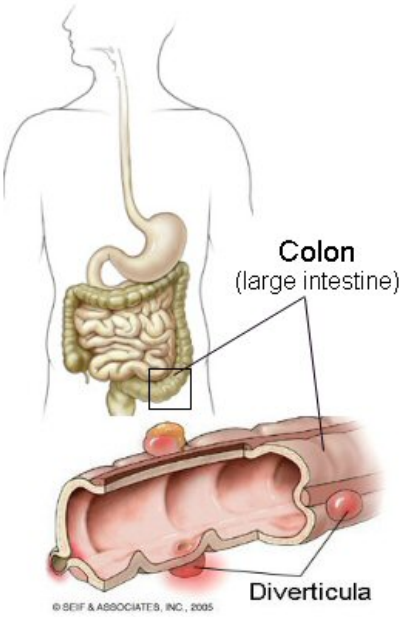
Diverticulitis

A diverticulum is a small pouch or sac on the colon. **Diverticulosis** is the presence of these diverticula on the colon. **Diverticulitis** is the irritation (*inflammation*) or infection of diverticula.

CAUSES

The colon and its diverticula contain germs (*bacteria*). If food particles block the tiny opening to a diverticulum, the bacteria inside can grow and cause an increase in pressure. This leads to infection and inflammation.



SYMPTOMS

- Belly (*abdominal*) pain and tenderness. Usually, the pain is located on the left side of your abdomen. However, it could be located elsewhere.
- Fever.
- Bloating.
- Feeling sick to your stomach (*nausea*).
- Throwing up (*vomiting*).
- Abnormal stools.

DIAGNOSIS

Your caregiver will take a history and perform a physical exam. Since many things can cause abdominal pain, other tests may be necessary. Tests may include:

- Blood tests.
- Urine tests.
- X-ray of the abdomen.
- CT scan of the abdomen.

Sometimes, surgery is needed to determine if diverticulitis or other conditions are causing your symptoms.

TREATMENT

Most of the time, you can be treated without surgery. Treatment includes:

- Resting the bowels by only having liquids for a few days.
- Intravenous (IV) fluids if you are losing fluids (*dehydrated*).
- Medicines (*antibiotics*) that kill germs may be given.
- Pain and nausea medicine, if needed.
- As you improve, eating soft, easily digestible foods.
- Surgery if the inflamed diverticulum has burst.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take all medicine as directed by your caregiver.
- Try a clear liquid diet (broth, tea, or water as directed by your caregiver). You may then gradually begin a bland diet as tolerated.
- You may be put on a high-fiber diet. Avoid nuts and seeds. Follow your caregiver's diet recommendations.
- If your caregiver has given you a follow-up appointment, it is very important that you go. Not going could result in lasting (*chronic*) or permanent injury, pain, and disability. If there is any problem keeping the appointment, call to reschedule.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Pain does not improve.
- You have a hard time advancing your diet beyond clear liquids.
- Bowel movements do not return to normal.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The pain becomes worse.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- Repeated vomiting occurs.
- You have bloody or black, tarry stools.
- Symptoms that brought you to your caregiver become worse or are not getting better.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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