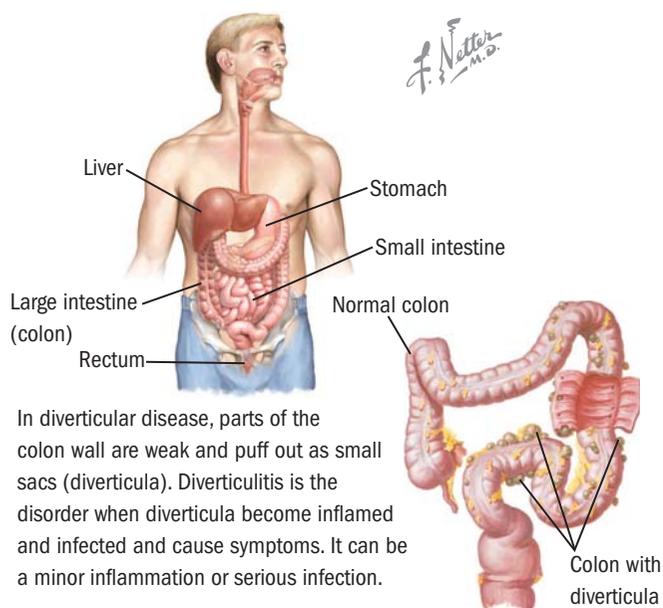


MANAGING YOUR DIVERTICULITIS



In diverticular disease, parts of the colon wall are weak and puff out as small sacs (diverticula). Diverticulitis is the disorder when diverticula become inflamed and infected and cause symptoms. It can be a minor inflammation or serious infection.

What Is Diverticulitis?

The large intestine (colon) is the last part of the digestive tract. Food passes through it just before waste leaves the body as a bowel movement (stool). In diverticular disease, parts of the colon wall are weak. These weak places can puff out like small sacs (diverticula). Each sac is called a diverticulum. These parts can become red and swollen (inflamed) and infected. Diverticulitis is the disorder when diverticula become inflamed and infected. Diverticulitis can be a minor inflammation or a serious infection.

Diverticulitis occurs in about half of people who have diverticuli. About 3 cases per 100 people occur each year. With treatment the prognosis is good, but relapses do occur. Complications include hemorrhage (bleeding), perforation (rupture), bowel blockage, and abscesses.

Symptoms are cramping and pain in the abdomen, usually in the left lower part. Pain is usually severe and starts suddenly. Other symptoms are fever, chills, constipation or diarrhea, and loss of appetite and nausea.



What Causes Diverticulitis?

Diverticuli become inflamed and infected, and small abscesses form, which causes symptoms. This disorder can occur if breakdown products from food move too slowly through the colon. Pressure in the colon from feces and food by-products causes weak spots and sacs. Diverticulitis is not contagious or cancerous.

What Are the Symptoms of Diverticulitis?

Symptoms are cramping and pain in the abdomen (belly) that stops and starts but then becomes constant. The pain is usually in the left lower abdomen. It's usually severe and starts suddenly. Other symptoms are fever, chills, constipation or diarrhea, and loss of appetite and nausea.



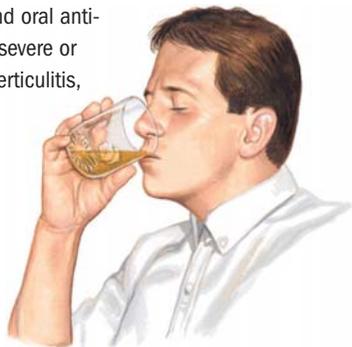
Your doctor will make a diagnosis from your medical history, physical examination, blood tests, x-rays, and CT.

How Is Diverticulitis Diagnosed?

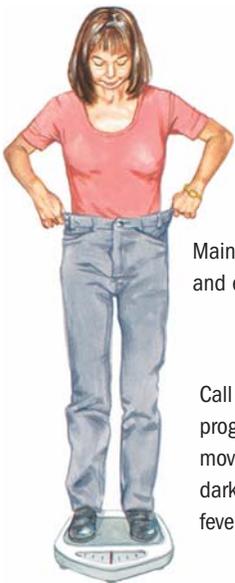
The doctor will make a diagnosis from a medical history, physical examination, blood tests, x-rays, and computed tomography (CT). Blood tests will check for infection. CT will show the inflammation and infection. Certain tests such as colonoscopy and barium enema shouldn't be done during acute diverticulitis because they may cause the colon to burst at the place of diverticulitis.

MANAGING YOUR DIVERTICULITIS

Rest, stool softeners, liquid diet, and oral antibiotics are used for treatment. For severe or complicated cases, or frequent diverticulitis, colon surgery is possible.



To avoid constipation, eat a high-fiber, low-salt, low-fat diet between attacks. Drink lots of fluids. But don't use laxatives.



Maintain a healthy weight and exercise daily.

Call your doctor if you have progressive weight loss, bowel movements with blood in them; dark, tarry bowel movements; fever; or abdominal pain.



How Is Diverticulitis Treated?

Outpatient treatment is usual, unless symptoms are severe and widespread infection or complications occur. Rest, stool softeners, liquid diet, and oral antibiotics are used. If a hospital stay is needed, treatment is similar, but intravenous fluids and antibiotics are given, together with pain medicine. At first, eating may not be allowed. Then, high-fiber, low-fat foods are slowly returned to the diet.

For severe or complicated cases, surgical removal of the affected part of the colon is possible. Surgery is also used for frequent diverticulitis to remove the affected area of the colon.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Diverticulitis:

- ✓ **DO** take medicines as prescribed.
- ✓ **DO** eat a high-fiber, low-salt, low-fat diet between attacks to avoid constipation. This will reduce your chances of getting diverticulitis.
- ✓ **DO** drink plenty of fluids between attacks.
- ✓ **DO** keep physically active between attacks.
- ✓ **DO** maintain your correct weight. Try to lose weight if you're overweight.
- ✓ **DO** maintain good bowel habits by trying to have a bowel movement daily.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have blood in your stool or dark, tarry bowel movements or unexplained weight loss.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if abdominal pain develops or becomes worse.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you get a fever.
- ⊘ **DON'T** strain with bowel movements.
- ⊘ **DON'T** use laxatives.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

• National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse
Tel: (800) 891-5389
Website: <http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health/digest/nddic.htm>

• American College of Gastroenterology
Tel: (703) 820-7400
Website: <http://www.acg.gi.org>