



## **Diverticular disease**

Diverticulosis are multiple small outpouchings, or diverticula, in the colon wall. They may be asymptomatic and only discovered during a colonoscopy or abdominal imaging or they can present with bleeding or infection. There is no need to treat asymptomatic diverticulosis. No diet modification is needed although a high-fiber low fat diet is beneficial in most individuals.

When diverticula become infected it is called diverticulitis. Patients may have uncomplicated diverticulitis and present with mild left lower quadrant abdominal pain, bloating, constipation, fever, decreased appetite, and malaise. The majority of these patients can be treated on an outpatient basis with oral antibiotics for approximately two weeks and a low residue diet.

Complicated diverticulitis can manifest as abscess formation and perforation. Patients can present with severe pain, high fever, and general malaise. These patients need to be managed in an inpatient setting with intravenous antibiotics, percutaneous drainage procedures and sometimes, surgical intervention.

Diverticular disease can sometimes manifest as a fistula between the bowel wall and another hollow structure like the bladder, vagina, or skin. Patients can present with air in the urine or vagina or a draining sinus from the skin. These patients require surgical intervention.

Patients with bleeding diverticulosis can lose a large amount of blood in a very short period of time. It is imperative for these individuals to present to an emergency department as soon as possible.

There was a theory that patients who suffered from diverticular disease should avoid seeds and nuts. This is no longer the case. There is no evidence that a diet rich in seeds and nuts in a patient with known diverticulosis will lead to bleeding or infection. During an acute attack these foods should be avoided but once resolution of symptoms has occurred the resumption of a diet high in fiber and low in fat should occur.

The above information does not replace instructions given to you by your healthcare provider. If you think you have diverticular disease please contact your primary care physician or call our office for an appointment.