

Diverticular Disease

Patient Information

Colorectal Surgery

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What is Diverticular Disease?

Diverticular disease is a common condition of the large bowel, where the lining of the bowel bulges through the surrounding muscle wall. Each bulge forms a pocket known as diverticulum. When these occur together in a segment of bowel, it is said to represent diverticular disease.

What causes diverticular disease?

Diverticular disease is very common in the Western World because the diet tends not to contain enough fibre. The lack of bulk in the faeces causes the bowel to work much harder and this strain causes the lining of the bowel to bulge through the muscular wall.

What symptoms can you expect?

Diverticular disease does not usually cause any symptoms apart from some lower abdominal cramps. Occasionally, it may cause irregular bowel function and constipation.

What is diverticulitis?

Very occasionally a diverticulum may become inflamed or infected. This is a condition known as diverticulitis. It usually presents with lower abdominal pain, bowel irregularity and fever. Such symptoms should be reported to your GP.

What can you do to control your symptoms to prevent diverticulitis?

It is very important to avoid constipation and to ensure regular bowel function. Laxatives should be used with caution as they can worsen the condition. If in doubt, you should consult your GP. A much better way of avoiding constipation is to eat a balanced diet with extra fibre.

- Use wholemeal rather than brown bread as it has a higher fibre content.
- When baking use wholemeal rather than white flour.
- Add unprocessed bran to the diet, either in the dry state or mixed with other foods.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables should be taken at least twice a day.
- Remember that the skins of some fruit and vegetables are often rich in fibre, e.g. apples, pears, tomatoes and potatoes.
- Avoid excessive amounts of sugar, sweet or fatty foods.

Some points to remember

- It will take several weeks for your bowel habit to improve and the full benefits may not be realised for many months.
- To maintain a healthy lifestyle, regular exercise will complement a balanced diet.
- Your GP will be happy to answer any questions that may arise.

Please use this space to write notes or reminders.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

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This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille and other languages upon request. For more information please ask in the department/ward.

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