

DIVERTICULAR DISEASE

Patient Information Leaflet



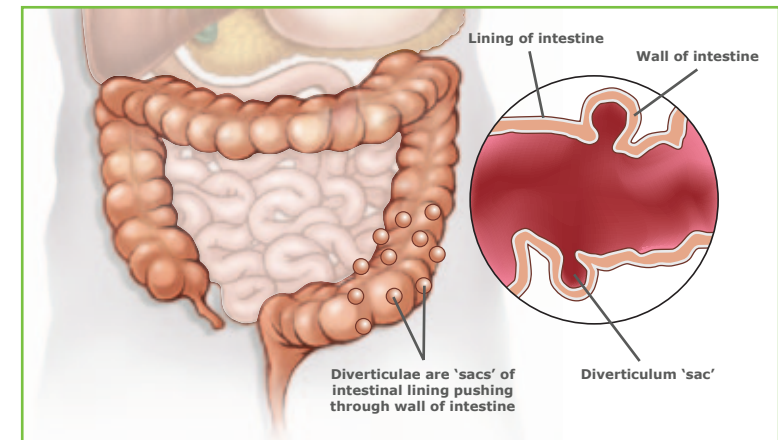
DIVERTICULAR DISEASE

Diverticular disease is a common condition in the western world; it is 40 times more common in the West than in developing countries. It is associated with lack of fibre in the diet and more frequently occurs as we get older. Ten percent of people aged 40 will have some evidence of diverticulosis and this rises to up to half of people by the age of 65 years of age; this percentage increases with age.

A DIVERTICULUM is a small pouch or sac that is formed when the lining of the bowel pushes through a weakness in the bowel wall.

DIVERTICULOSIS means the presence of these pouches.

DIVERTICULITIS means the pouches have become inflamed.



Symptoms

Many people with diverticulosis will have no symptoms at all. Some people will develop symptoms which include alterations in bowel habit, leading to constipation and or diarrhoea. Abdominal pain can sometimes be present.

Diagnosis is often confirmed by a colonoscopy.

Acute Diverticulitis

This can occur in a minority of patients and occurs if the diverticular pouches become blocked, resulting in inflammation. If this happens, you will have abdominal pain, a high temperature and either constipation or diarrhoea. You may also have some rectal bleeding. If acute infection is present, you will need antibiotics from your GP. If the infection is severe, you will feel very unwell and occasionally it is necessary to be hospitalised to have treatment with intravenous fluid and antibiotics.

Management of Diverticular Disease

Having a diagnosis of diverticular disease does not mean you cannot live a normal life. It can be easily controlled, and not cause any problems by following these guidelines.

- Try to eat a healthy diet and increase the amount of fibre in your diet.
- Try to keep your stool soft. Increasing your water intake will help and the use of laxatives may be necessary.
- Try to increase the amount of water in your daily diet. Tea and coffee are ok, but they can dehydrate you. At least 1.5 litres of water a day is recommended.
- Avoid straining to pass a stool.
- If you do experience pain and feel unwell with a temperature you should contact your GP.

If you experience regular acute attacks it can occasionally become necessary to have surgery to remove the affected part of the bowel. However, this is only in extreme cases.

How to increase Fibre in your Diet

Fibre occurs naturally in all plant foods and is needed for bulk in the diet and to help the movement of faeces through the colon. Fibre absorbs water and swells to become bulky. It helps prevent constipation.

Fibre is found in cereal grain such as wheat, oats, barley and rice. It is also present in nuts, seeds, fruits, vegetables and pulses including beans and lentils.

Eat high fibre foods regularly throughout the day, not just at breakfast.

Try and eat your five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

Drink plenty of fluid; at least 1.5 litres of water a day as well as tea coffee etc.

Remember that fibre absorbs water. Therefore, the more fibre in your diet, the more water you need to drink, to help the fibre and water create a softer stool, which will move the stool through the colon more effectively.

Oats and oat bran are especially useful as the soluble fibre in oats do not produce wind. Wind can be a problem for some people who eat a lot of wheat especially whole wheat and wheat bran.

ALL CORRESPONDENCE AND APPOINTMENTS

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