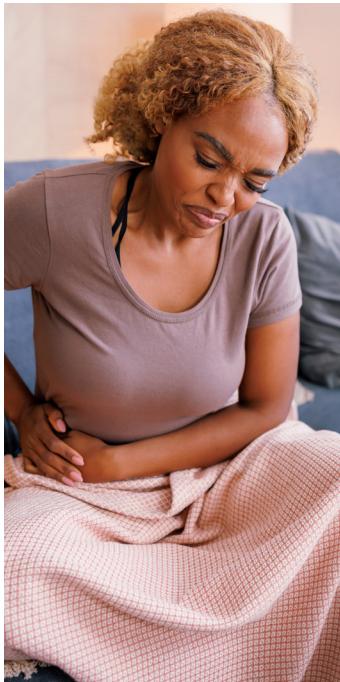




Diverticulosis & Diverticulitis

Sometimes small pouches bulge outward through weak spots in the colon. This is called diverticulosis. The pockets (called diverticula) can fill with intestinal waste. With diverticulitis, these pockets and areas around them get inflamed or infected.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Diverticulosis

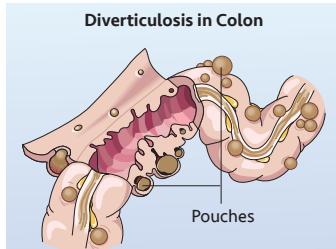
Often this has no symptoms. Some persons may have:

- Mild cramps
- Bloating
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Blood in the stool

Diverticulitis

- Severe cramping and bloating in the abdomen, usually on the lower left side. The pain is made worse with a bowel movement.
- Tenderness over the abdomen
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fever

CAUSES



A low fiber diet is thought to be the main cause. Constipation and overuse of laxatives may also play a role.

TREATMENT

Diverticulitis needs medical treatment. Diverticulosis can't be cured, but self-care measures can reduce symptoms and prevent serious problems.

TRIAGE QUESTIONS

Do you have any of these problems?

- Very severe abdominal pain
- Signs of an intestinal obstruction: Inability to pass stool or even gas; mild fever and weakness; abdominal cramps that come and go; the abdomen gets more and more swollen with increasing pain; hiccups that don't stop; and vomiting
- Blood in the stool, tarlike, or maroon-colored stool

NO

YES

GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

Do you have any of these problems?

- Changes in bowel habits last longer than 2 weeks.
- Tenderness, pain, mild cramping, or a bloated feeling. These are usually felt in the lower left side of the abdomen.
- Gas. Nausea. Constipation.
- Pain in the abdomen and a fever

NO

YES

SEE DOCTOR

UP

USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE

- Get regular exercise. Drink 1-1/2 to 2 quarts of water daily. Eat a diet high in fiber, including fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, and nuts.
- Avoid the regular use of "stimulant" laxatives, such as Ex-Lax. Ask your doctor about taking bulk-forming laxatives like Metamucil.
- Try not to strain when you have bowel movements.