

# Diverticulitis and How to Treat at Home

## What is diverticulosis?

Diverticulosis (di-ver-tik-u-LO-sis) is when you have pouches in the colon that bulge out. These pouches are called diverticula (di-ver-TIK-u-lah). They are caused by pressure in the colon that weakens the bowel wall. **Not eating enough fiber, not exercising enough, and taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen can cause diverticulosis.**

## What is diverticulitis?

Diverticulitis (di-ver-tik-u-LI-tis) is when diverticula are inflamed or infected. One in four people with diverticulosis will get diverticulitis.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms vary and can include **stomach pain (usually on the left side), fever, constipation or diarrhea, and nausea.**

## How is it diagnosed?

First call your doctor and review your symptoms with them. They will ask you questions about your symptoms and may need to examine you. He or she may also do blood tests, a computed tomography (CT) scan, or an ultrasound if the diagnosis is unclear.

## How is it treated?

If you have mild diverticulitis, **you can treat this at home.** You should **not eat** and should **drink only clear liquids for 2-4 days.** You may use pain medications such as Tylenol if you are able to take it. Then, as long as symptoms have settled, you can start to eat bland, easy to digest foods such as rice, bananas, fruit, soups, toast, jello and after a few days of doing this, you can usually resume a normal diet. If your symptoms have not resolved, or you develop a fever you should inform your doctor. **Some** patients may need antibiotics if their symptoms do not resolve with bowel rest. If you have moderate or severe diverticulitis, you may need to go to the hospital for IV antibiotics.

## Will I need a colonoscopy?

Most people will not need a colonoscopy. But, if you have severe diverticulitis, your doctor may tell you to get a colonoscopy a few months after your symptoms have gone away.

## Can diverticulitis come back?

Yes, but in most people (9 out of 10), diverticulitis does not come back. You can decrease your chances of getting diverticulitis again by eating a lot of fiber. **Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans are high in fiber. Exercising, losing weight if you are overweight, and stopping smoking if you smoke also decrease your chances of getting it again.**

## Should I avoid certain foods?

Although it was once thought that certain foods (nuts, seeds, or popcorn) may get stuck in the diverticula and cause inflammation, new research proves **this is not true.** You no longer need to avoid these foods.

## Where can I get more information?

American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy

- <http://www.asge.org/patients/patients.aspx?id=6818>

Mayo Clinic

- <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/diverticulitis/DS00070>

National Institutes of Health

- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/diverticulosisanddiverticulitis.html>