

Diverticulitis

Mayo Clinic: www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diverticulitis



Diverticulitis (di-vur-tik-u-LL-tis) occurs when one or more diverticula in your digestive tract become inflamed or infected. Diverticula are small, bulging pouches that can form anywhere in your digestive system, including your esophagus, stomach and small intestine. However, they're most commonly found in the large intestine. Diverticula are common, especially after age 40. When you have diverticula, the condition is known as diverticulosis. This condition can cause severe abdominal pain, fever, nausea and a marked change in your bowel habits. Mild cases of diverticulitis can be treated with rest, changes in your diet and antibiotics. But serious cases of diverticulitis may require surgery.

Common signs and symptoms of diverticulitis include:

- Pain that's often sudden, severe and located in the lower left side of the abdomen
- Change in bowel habits
- Abdominal tenderness
- Fever
- Nausea and vomiting
- Less commonly, abdominal pain that may be mild at first and become worse
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Bloating
- Bleeding from your rectum

Causes Diverticula usually develop when naturally weak places in your colon give way under pressure. This causes marble-sized pouches to protrude through the colon wall. Exactly how diverticula become inflamed or infected isn't clear.

Risk factors These factors may increase your chances of getting diverticulitis:

- **Aging.** You're more likely to get diverticulitis if you're over 40, although it's not known why.
- **Too little fiber.** Diverticulitis is rare in countries where people eat a high-fiber diet that helps keep stools soft. But it's common in industrialized nations, such as the U.S., where the average diet is high in refined carbohydrates and low in fiber.
- **Lack of exercise.** Lack of exercise has been associated with a greater risk of formation of diverticula, putting a person at risk of diverticulitis.
- **Obesity.** Being seriously overweight increases your odds of developing diverticulitis.
- **Smoking.** People who smoke cigarettes are more likely to experience diverticulitis.

Tests and diagnosis

Because diverticula by themselves usually don't cause problems, most people learn they have diverticulosis during routine screening examinations for colorectal cancer or during tests that check for other intestinal problems. Diverticulitis, on the other hand, is usually diagnosed during an acute attack.

Treatments and drugs

- Treatment depends on the severity of your signs and symptoms and whether this is your first attack of diverticulitis. If your symptoms are mild, a liquid or low-fiber diet and antibiotics may be all you need.
- If your condition calls for home treatment, expect to rest and consume a liquid diet for a few days so that your infection can heal. Once your symptoms improve — usually within three days — you can gradually add high-fiber foods, such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables, to y

