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Endoscopy

Gastrointestinal Medicine

Nutrition



The Centre for GI Health

DIVERTICULAR DISEASE

Diverticular disease is a common condition of middle age, found in up to 40% of people over 50 years. It is less common in younger patients.

The condition occurs when small weaknesses form in the lining of the large bowel, usually the sigmoid and descending colon, (see diagram below). The weakened areas expand with time and form small pouches or diverticulae.

Many people with diverticular disease are free of symptoms but some experience occasional bouts of cramping abdominal pain, constipation and attacks of diarrhoea. When bacteria become trapped inside a diverticulum, infection and inflammation (acute diverticulitis) may develop.

This complication usually requires treatment with antibiotics and in severe cases, admission to hospital. Occasionally, bleeding (haemorrhage) occurs from an inflamed diverticulum.

Once formed, diverticula never disappear, however their formation may be limited by adopting a high fibre diet. Improved fibre intake may help limit symptoms. It is unusual for patients to require an operation for diverticular disease, but removing affected bowel may be necessary in patients with severe or symptomatic disease.

THIS CONDITION DOES NOT LEAD TO CANCER

HIGH FIBRE FOODS

- Cereals
- Fruit
- Leafy Vegetables
- Fibre Supplements (Metamucil, Fybogel, Normacol, Benefiber etc)

KEY WORDS

DIVERTICULOSIS:

Condition where small "pockets" (diverticula) form in the bowel wall.

DIVERTICULITIS:

Condition where the pockets become inflamed, usually from a bacterial infection.

