

News to Digest

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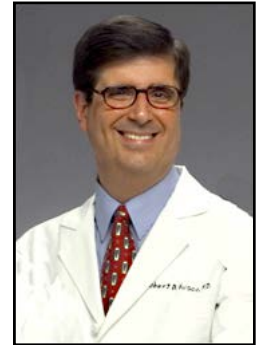
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Say “NUTS” to Diverticulosis!

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To understand diverticulosis, it is first necessary to know a bit about the anatomy and function of the intestines. After leaving your stomach, food is digested and nutrition absorbed in your small intestine. (The term “small

intestine” refers to the diameter.

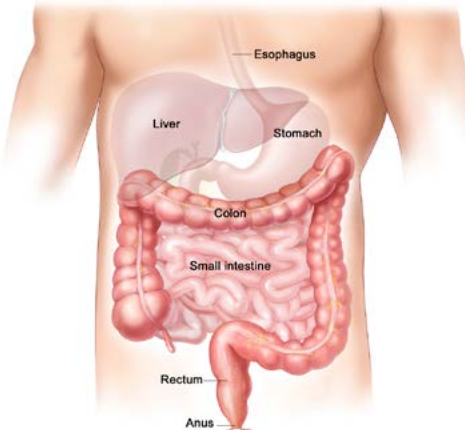
It is actually about 20 feet in length.) After the digestive process is complete, the leftover liquid waste leaves the small intestine and flows into

the right side of the large intestine, or colon. As this liquid waste travels through the colon, the excess water is purified and recycled back into your blood stream.

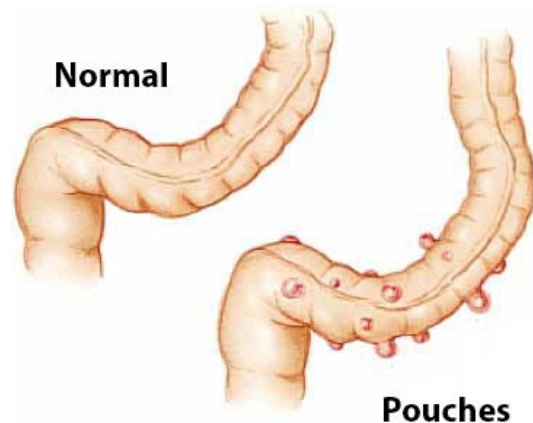
So, your small intestine absorbs the nutrition from your food, and your colon reclaims the water, much like a water treatment plant. The residual solid waste is stored in your rectum until it is convenient to have a bowel movement. Just above the rectum in the left lower abdomen is the sigmoid colon which is a high pressure zone - squeezing and pushing the stool along. It is here that most problems with diverticulosis occur.

What Is Diverticulosis ?

Diverticulosis is a condition, rather than a disease. It most often affects the large intestine, or colon. Normally, the inner wall of the colon is strong and relatively smooth. A colon affected by diverticulosis has weak



spots in the walls. These defects allow the development of balloon-like sacs, or out pouches - much like a bubble forming on a worn inner tube. These hollow pouches, called diverticula, occur when the inner intestinal lining has pushed through the weakened areas of the colon wall. A single pouch is called a diverticulum. *The presence of these pouches on the colon wall is called diverticulosis. When the pouches become inflamed or infected, it is called diverticulitis.*



Who Gets Diverticulosis?

Diverticulosis is a common condition affecting both men and women. Since diverticulosis takes so long to develop, it usually appears later in life. It affects over 50% of those over the age of 60. Occasionally, it occurs in much younger individuals where it is usually a more aggressive problem. This disorder is mostly one of Western society. It is quite rare in rural Africa or India where the diet consists mostly of grains very

high in fiber. Many researchers feel that our typical low fiber American diet is responsible for the high incidence of diverticulosis in the United States. A diet low in fiber promotes constipation and straining at bowel movements which may worsen diverticulosis. Once diverticula have formed, there is no way to reverse the process. The pouches are there for the rest of your life.

Complications Of Diverticulosis

Considering how many millions of Americans have diverticulosis, it is remarkable that so few people are affected by its complications. In fact, most people with diverticulosis experience no symptoms at all and will remain symptom free for the rest of their life. However, complications do occur and can be serious. These may include abdominal pain, rectal bleeding, and diverticulitis.

Abdominal Pain

Most diverticular pouches are painless. But over time, spasms may occur and individuals may experience intermittent dull or crampy pain in the lower left abdomen. This pain is often associated with constipation. When diverticulosis is far advanced, the sigmoid colon may become narrowed or distorted. When this occurs, there may be thin bowel movements or pellet-shaped stools, persistent bouts of constipation, and an occasional rush of diarrhea.

2. Rectal Bleeding

Rectal bleeding occurs from a ruptured blood vessel in one of the pouches. This may produce a gush of red blood from the rectum or maroon-colored stools. The bleeding is usually self-limited and stops on its own, but requires careful evaluation and usually a brief hospitalization. Occasionally, emergency surgery is necessary to stop the loss of blood.

3. Diverticulitis

Diverticulitis is a complication of diverticulosis. The colon is home to many beneficial bacteria - helpful as long as they stay within the colon. Sometimes, one of the diverticular pouches becomes thin and ruptures allowing bacteria, normally contained inside the colon, to seep through the wall. This causes infection outside the colon. When this occurs, it is called diverticulitis. Fortunately, this only occurs in less than 5% of those with diverticulosis.

Diverticulitis is divided into simple and complicated forms. Simple diverticulitis, which accounts for 75% of cases, is not associated with complication and typically responds to medical treatment without the need for surgery. There is usually pain in the left lower abdomen which responds to temporary dietary restrictions and antibiotic therapy.

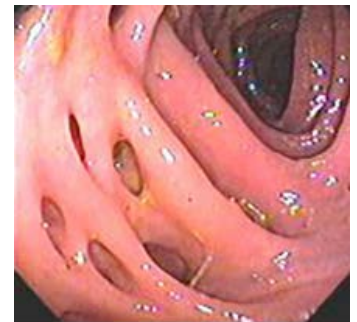
Complications requiring surgery may include the formation of abscess (a large internal collection of pus), fistulas (an internal "tunnel" that develops, often from the colon and into the bladder or vagina), obstruction and peritonitis. In these cases, surgery is usually necessary.

Diagnosis

Because diverticulosis usually causes no symptoms, it is usually discovered during an intestinal examination performed for other reasons. This may include tests such as barium x-ray, flexible sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy examination. The latter two tests are performed through the rectum with a lighted flexible scope, so the colon can be viewed from the inside, providing additional information about the problem. The diverticular pouches are on the outside of the colon, but the openings on the inside are readily visible at colonoscopy.



Normal Colon Lining



Diverticulosis "pouches"

Treatment

Treatment of diverticulosis varies. If there are no symptoms, treatment is usually not necessary, but a fiber-rich diet is advisable. When diverticulitis occurs, simple bowel rest and antibiotics can usually abort a mild attack. In severe cases, patients may need hospitalization and antibiotics intravenously. While most individuals recover from diverticulitis without surgery, sometimes it is necessary to remove the affected

portion of the colon. The healthy ends are then re-joined. This is much like fixing a bad garden hose and splicing the good ends back together. The most common reason for surgery is to stop repeated episodes of diverticulitis, chronic diverticular pain, or recurrent rectal bleeding. Emergency surgery for this condition requires an open abdominal incision, has a higher risk of infection and pain, and often requires a temporary colostomy, or “bag.” Whenever possible surgery should be done between attacks. Then, minimally invasive techniques are often sufficient with less risk of infection, less post-operative pain and without need for a temporary colostomy bag.

High-Fiber Diet

As mentioned earlier, an inadequate diet is considered the leading cause of diverticulosis. Most health experts agree the lack of fiber and bulk in the American diet is a major cause of chronic constipation and diverticular disease. As our foods are becoming more highly refined, more of us are suffering from symptoms of diverticular disease. Once diverticula have formed, there is no way to reverse the process. The pouches are there for the rest of your life.

Chances are you're not getting enough fiber in your diet. In fact, most Americans average only 15 to 20 grams of dietary fiber per day. Most dietitians, however, use 30 grams of fiber as the minimum benchmark for a high-fiber diet.

Adding fiber and bulk to your diet helps promote regular bowel function and is very important in controlling and minimizing this disease. Food rich in fiber such as bran cereals, whole-wheat bread, a variety of beans, and fresh fruits and vegetables help keep the stools soft and bulky. We all should make an effort to include more fiber in our diet, but don't be too enthusiastic. That is, do not add too much fiber too soon. Otherwise troublesome side effects, such as increased gas and bloating, may occur. *The golden rule regarding fiber is to go slow.* Start with small amounts and gradually increase the extra fiber in your diet.



Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition

The Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition is a private medical practice in Moon Township, PA with six experienced gastroenterologists and staff that is dedicated to the prevention and treatment of digestive disorders.

Our physicians have been serving the needs of those in Western Pennsylvania and surrounding areas since 1977 with a combined medical staff clinical experience of over 200 years. We have cared for tens of thousands of individuals with digestive problems.

We fully understand the very sensitive nature of digestive illness and realize that each case is unique. Our objective is to consistently deliver high quality personal care in an efficient, private, and patient friendly environment. We are very proud of the care we provide our patients and would be honored to care for you and your family should any digestive issues arise...

For more information, give us a call at 412.262.1000 or access our website at www.gihealth.com.

Many people ask about seeds. There's a common misconception that eating seeds, nuts or corn can worsen diverticulosis. However, there is no scientific evidence to support this. Actually a 20-year study at Harvard Medical School demonstrated that individuals who frequently consumed such items had a 28% decrease in the risk of diverticulitis and bleeding. So enjoy a high-fiber diet, but there are no foods to avoid.

Prevention

There is no reliable way to prevent diverticulosis, but a high-fiber diet may help lessen the risk. There is some evidence that adding healthy bacteria, or probiotics, to your daily diet may decrease the risk of diverticulitis. Also, some over the counter medications may precipitate an attack of diverticulitis - particularly NSAIDs such as ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, Aleve, and Naprosyn. Excessive use of these medications should be avoided, especially in those who have already suffered from a diverticulitis attack.

Fiber Content of Common Foods

Basically, the term fiber refers to carbohydrates that cannot be digested. Fiber is present in all plants that are eaten for food, including fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes. Looking to add more fiber to your diet? Fiber — along with adequate fluid intake — moves quickly and relatively easily through your digestive tract and helps it function properly. A high-fiber diet may also help reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

<p>Almonds slivered 1 tbsp 0.6 sliced 1/4 cup 2.4</p> <p>Apple raw 1 small 3 raw 1 med 4 raw 1 large 4.5 applesauce 2/3 cup 3.6</p> <p>Apricots raw 1 whole 0.8 dried 2 halves 1.7 canned in syrup 3 halves 2.5</p> <p>Artichokes cooked 1 large 4.5 canned hearts 4 or 5 sm 4.5</p> <p>Asparagus cooked, small spears 1/2 cup 1.7</p> <p>Avocado diced 1/4 cup 1.7 sliced 2 slices 0.9 whole 1/2 avg.size 2.8</p> <p>Baked beans in sauce (8-oz can) 1 cup 16</p> <p>Banana whole 1 med 8" 3</p> <p>Beans black, cooked 1 cup 19.4 Great Northern 1 cup 16 kidney beans, canned or 1/2 cup 9.7 cooked 1 cup 19.4</p> <p>Beets cooked, sliced 1/2 cup 2.5 whole 3 sm. 3.7</p> <p>Blackberries raw, no sugar 1/2 cup 4.4 canned, in juice pack 1/2 cup 5 jam, with seeds 1 tbsp 0.7</p> <p>Bread Boston brown 2 slices 4.0 cracked wheat 2 slices 3.6 high-bran bread 2 slices 7.0 white 2 slices 1.9 dark rye (whole grain) slices 5.8* 2 pumpernickel 2 slices 4 seven-grain 2 slices 6.5 whole wheat 2 slices 6 whole wheat raisin 2 slices 6.5</p> <p>Broccoli raw 1/2 cup 4 frozen 4 spears 5 fresh, cooked 3/4 cup 7</p> <p>Brussel sprouts cooked 3/4 cup 3 1 cup 9.6</p> <p>Cabbage, white or red raw 1/2 cup 1.5 cooked 2/3 cup 3</p>	<p>Carrots raw, slivered (4-5 sticks) 1/4 1.7 cup 1.7 cooked 1/2 cup 3.4</p> <p>Cauliflower raw, chopped 3 tiny buds 1.2 cooked, chopped 7/8 cup 2.3</p> <p>Celery raw 1/4 cup 2 chopped 2 tbsp 1 cooked 1/2 cup 3</p> <p>Cereal All-Bran 3 tbsp 5 Bran Buds 3 tbsp 5 Bran Chex 2/3 cup 5 Bran Flakes, plain 1 cup 5 with raisins 1 cup 6 Cornflakes 3/4 cup 2.6 Cracklin' Bran 1/2 cup 4 oatmeal 3/4 cup 7.7 Nabisco 100% Bran 1/2 cup 4 Puffed wheat 1 cup 3.3 Raisin Bran 1 cup 5 Wheaties 1 cup 2</p> <p>Cherries sweet, raw 10 1.2 sweet, raw 1/2 cup 1.0*</p> <p>Chickpeas (garbanzos) canned 1/2 cup 6 cooked 1 cup 12</p> <p>Corn (sweet) on cob 1 med ear 5 kernels 1/2 cup 5 cream-style, canned 1/2 cup 5 succotash 1/2 cup 66</p> <p>Crackers graham 2 1.4 Ry-Krisp 3 2.3 Triscuits 2 2 Wheat Thins 6 2.2</p> <p>Cucumber, raw unpeeled 10 thin slices 0.7</p> <p>Dates, pitted 2 39</p> <p>Eggplant baked with tomatoes 2 thick slices 4</p> <p>Endive, raw salad 10 leaves 0.6</p> <p>Figs dried 3 10.5 fresh 1 2</p> <p>Grapefruit 1/2 3</p> <p>Grapes white 20 1 red or black 15-20 1</p> <p>Green (snap) beans fresh or frozen 1/2 cup 2.1</p>	<p>Greens, cooked 1/2 cup 20 collards, beet greens, dandelion, kale, Swiss chard</p> <p>Lentils brown, raw 1/3 cup 5.5 brown, cooked 2/3 cup 5.5 red, raw 1/2 cup 6.4 red, cooked 1 cup 6.4</p> <p>Lettuce (Boston, leaf, iceberg) shredded 1 cup 0.8</p> <p>Macaroni whole wheat, cooked 1 cup 5.7 regular baked 10 oz 2.2</p> <p>Muffins English, whole wheat 1 whole 3.7 Bran, whole wheat 2 4.6</p> <p>Mushrooms raw 5 sm 1.4 sauteed or baked 4 lg 2 canned sliced 1/4 cup 2</p> <p>Noodles whole wheat egg 1 cup 5.7 spinach whole wheat 1 cup 6</p> <p>Onion raw 1 tbsp 0.2 cooked 1/2 cup 1.5 instant minced 1 tbsp 0.3 green, raw (scallion) 1/4 cup 0.8</p> <p>Orange 1 lg 70 1 sm 35</p> <p>Peach raw 1 med 2.3 canned in light syrup 2 halves 1.4</p> <p>Peanut butter 1 tbsp 86</p> <p>Peanuts dry roasted 1 tbsp 1.1</p> <p>Pear 1 med 88</p> <p>Peas green, fresh or frozen 1/2 cup 9.1 black-eyed 1/2 cup 8 split peas, dried 1/2 cup 6.7 cooked 1 cup 13.4</p> <p>Peas and carrots frozen 1/2 pkg(5 oz) 6</p> <p>Peppers green sweet, raw 2 tbsp 0.3 green sweet, cooked 1/2 cup 1.2 red sweet (pimento) 2 tbsp 1 red chili, fresh 1 tbsp 1.2 dried, crushed 1 tsp 1.2</p> <p>Pineapple fresh, cubed 1/2 cup 0.8 canned 1 cup 0.8</p>	<p>Potatoes Idaho, baked 1 sm (6 oz) 4.2 mashed potato (with 1 tbsp milk) 1/2 sweet: baked 1 sm (5 oz) 4</p> <p>Prunes pitted 3 1.9</p> <p>Radishes 3 5</p> <p>Raspberries, red fresh/frozen 1/2 cup 4.6 Raspberry jam 1 tbsp 1</p> <p>Rice white 1/2 cup 2 brown 1/2 cup 5.5 instant 1 serv 0.7</p> <p>Sauerkraut canned 2/3 cup 3.1</p> <p>Shredded wheat large biscuit 1 piece 2.2 spoon size 1 cup 4.4</p> <p>Spaghetti whole wheat, plain 1 cup 5.6 with meat sauce 1 cup 5.6 with tomato sauce 1 cup 6</p> <p>Spinach raw 1 cup 3.5 cooked 1/2 cup 7</p> <p>Squash summer (yellow) 1/2 cup 2 winter 1/2 cup 3.5</p> <p>Zucchini raw or cooked 1/2 cup 3</p> <p>Strawberries 1 cup 3</p> <p>Sunflower kernels 1 tbsp 0.5 Sweet pickle relish 1 tbsp 0.5 relish 1 tbsp 0.5</p> <p>Tomatoes raw 1 sm. 1.4 canned 1/2 cup 1 sauce 1/2 cup 0.5</p> <p>Walnuts shelled, chopped 1 tbsp 1.1</p> <p>Watermelon 1 thick slice 68</p> <p>Yams (orange fleshed sweet potato) cooked or baked 1 med (6oz) 6.8</p>
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