



DIVERTICULAR DISEASE

What is diverticular disease?

Diverticula are small pouches that bulge out from the intestinal wall at weak points between the muscles. Diverticular disease simply means that a person has multiple diverticula in their gastrointestinal tract.

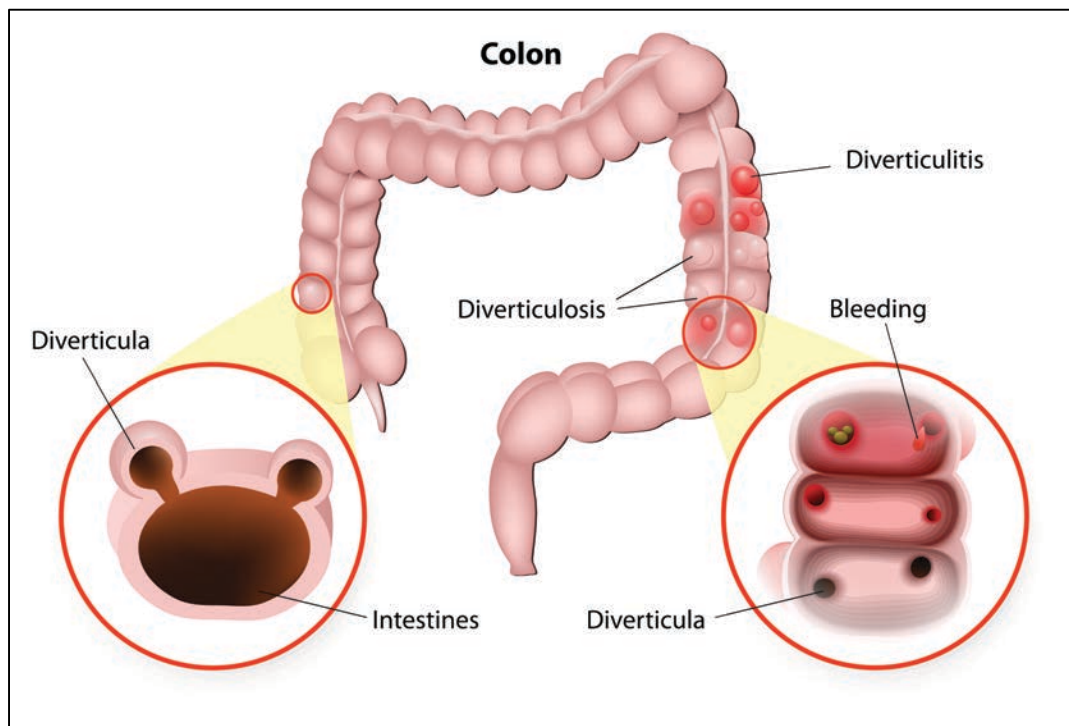
Diverticula are mostly seen in the lower parts of the large bowel (colon). They are extremely common, with 50% of people over 60 years old having diverticular disease in their colon. Only 20% of people with diverticular disease will develop a complication like diverticulitis.

Diverticular disease is usually caused by a diet low in fibre, chronic constipation and straining and age-related weakness of the bowel wall musculature.

What are the complications of diverticular disease?

The four main problems that may arise from diverticular disease are:

- infection (diverticulitis)
- bleeding
- perforation (rupture)
- abscess formation





What is diverticulitis?

Symptoms of diverticulitis (inflammation and infection) include

- pain in the lower abdomen (usually to the left side)
- fevers and/or chills
- nausea
- vomiting
- constipation or diarrhoea

Diverticulitis is diagnosed by a history, clinical examination, blood tests and a CT scan. The treatment will depend on the severity of the inflammation. Sometimes your GP will be able to manage diverticulitis with oral antibiotics. If the symptoms are more severe you may need admission to hospital for intravenous (IV) antibiotics and fluids while the bowel is rested (nothing to eat or drink).

How long will it take for me to recover?

Depending on the severity of the attack, you may need to be in hospital for up to five days or more for IV antibiotics, while food is reintroduced gradually.

Diverticulitis can at times be so severe that the bowel perforates (ruptures) leading to peritonitis (a potentially fatal inflammation of the lining of the abdominal cavity). This is a surgical emergency and may require an urgent operation.

If you are admitted to hospital with diverticulitis, Dr Lancashire may arrange for a dietician to talk to you about dietary modification to prevent constipation and further attacks. It is also likely that he will send you home on tablet antibiotics.

What do I need to eat when I get home?

Dietary advice is attached to the last page of this document.

Do I need a colonoscopy?

Dr Lancashire may also recommend that you have a colonoscopy in the months following an attack if you haven't had one before.

When should I contact Dr Lancashire?

You should contact Dr Lancashire if your symptoms recur, have fevers or increasing abdominal pain.

Useful contact numbers:

- Dr Ben Lancashire's Rooms: (07) 3054 0694
- Mater Private Emergency Centre: (07) 3163 1000
- Mater Private Hospital Switchboard: (07) 3163 8111



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DIETARY ADVICE FOR DIVERTICULAR DISEASE

More to come.....