

What is Diverticular Disease?

Diverticulosis occurs in 10% of people over age 40 and 50% of people over age 60.

1 Introduction

Diverticular disease consists of two conditions that occur in the colon. Diverticulosis is the presence of tiny bulges or pockets that form from the wall of the colon, known as diverticula. Diverticulitis is an inflammatory condition that occurs when the diverticula become inflamed or infected. Diverticulosis is fairly common and does not require treatment. However, it can develop into diverticulitis which is much more serious and potentially dangerous.

2 Causes

Scientists do not know the exact cause of diverticular disease, but the most commonly accepted theory for the formation of diverticula is related to high pressure in the colon, causing weak areas to bulge out and form sacs. Some other possible causes are:

- Genetics
- Obesity
- Low fiber diets
- Bacteria or stool caught in the colon
- Lack of exercise

3 Symptoms

Most people with diverticulosis do not experience any symptoms or complications. If it develops into diverticulitis, some symptoms may include:

- Pain, tenderness or sensitivity in the lower left side of the abdomen
- Fever or chills
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Cramps in the lower abdomen
- Rectal bleeding

4 Treatments

As a preventative measure, people are advised to maintain a diet high in fiber, fruits, vegetables and limit red meat. A mild case of diverticulitis is typically treated with oral antibiotics and a liquid diet for a few days until symptoms improve. Treatment for more complicated diverticulitis can include intravenous antibiotics and surgery on affected segments of the colon.

Did you know?

The rate of diverticulosis increases with age and affects almost everyone over age 80.

For more information on diverticular disease and supportive resources, please visit clevelandclinic.org.

References:

<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/diverticulosis-diverticulitis/treatment>

<https://fascrs.org/patients/diseases-and-conditions/az/diverticular-disease>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diverticulitis/symptoms-causes/syc-20371758>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diverticular-disease-and-diverticulitis/>