



Diverticulitis Discharge Advice



Cork Emergency Medicine

This leaflet explains more about diverticulitis, including common symptoms and management.

What are diverticulae?

A diverticulum is a small pouch with a narrow neck that sticks out from the wall of the gut. They can develop on any part of the gut, but usually occur in the colon (sometimes called the large bowel or large intestine). They most commonly develop in the section of the colon leading towards the back passage (rectum).

Who gets diverticula?

Diverticula are common and associated with ageing. It is thought the pressure of hard stools (poo) passing through the large intestine that has become weakened with age causes the bulges to form. It is estimated that half of people have diverticula by the time they are 50 years old, and 70% of people have them by the time they are 80 years old. The majority of people with diverticula will not have any symptoms; this is known as diverticulosis.

What are the symptoms?

You may get ease from pain and bloating by going to the toilet to pass faeces. Some people develop diarrhoea or constipation, and some people pass mucus with their stools. A diagnosis of diverticular disease is usually made by confirming the presence of diverticula and by ruling out other causes of the symptoms, sometimes coincidentally when having other test e.g. CT scan.

A test called a colonoscopy may be advised at a later date, this is where a doctor uses a special flexible telescope to look into the bowel.

What is Diverticulitis (inflammation)?

Diverticulitis is a condition where one or more of the diverticula become inflamed and infected. This may occur if some faeces get trapped and stagnate in a diverticulum. Bacteria in the trapped faeces may then multiply and cause infection.

About 1 in 5 people with diverticula develop a bout of diverticulitis at some stage. Some people have recurring bouts of diverticulitis.

If you are concerned, please contact the Emergency Department you first attended:

Mercy University Hospital
(021) 230 5011

M-UCC at
(St. Mary's Health Campus)
(021) 4926900

CUH
(021) 4920200

Local Injury Unit
Mallow General Hospital
(022) 58506

Bantry General Hospital
(027) 52900



Symptoms include:

A constant pain in the abdomen. It is most commonly in the lower left side of the abdomen, but can occur in any part of the abdomen.

High temperature (fever). Constipation or diarrhoea. Some blood mixed with your stools. Feeling sick (nauseated) or being sick (vomiting).

When symptoms are not too severe If you develop diverticulitis you may need a course of antibiotic medicine and be encouraged to drink plenty of clear fluids. You may be advised not to eat anything until symptoms settle. You may need some strong painkillers for a while.

Once symptoms go, you can resume a normal diet. However, a high-fibre diet is usually best.

What happens if symptoms are severe or prolonged?

If symptoms are severe or do not settle with tablets then you may need to be admitted to hospital. You may be given antibiotics and fluids directly into a vein via a drip and painkilling injections for 24-48 hours.

Obstruction, abscess, fistula, and peritonitis

Surgery to remove affected section of the intestine is sometimes recommended if there's a risk of serious complications, although this is rare.

What is the treatment for diverticular disease? A high-fibre diet is usually advised as it helps to keep stools soft and bulky and reduces

For example, start by swapping white bread for wholemeal bread. Introduce something new every few days, such as adding beans or extra vegetables to a casserole, or having a piece of fruit for pudding.

Adapted by [Dr Ben Fusco](#) from:

<https://www.bsuh.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/09/Diverticulitis.pdf>

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