

UnityPoint Health - Allen Hospital

Digestive Health Center

Diverticulosis: Care Instructions

YOUR CARE INSTRUCTIONS

In diverticulosis, pouches called diverticula form in the wall of the large intestine (colon). The pouches do not cause any pain or other symptoms. Most people who have diverticulosis do not know they have it. But the pouches sometimes bleed, and if they become infected, they can cause pain and other symptoms. When this happens, it is called diverticulitis.

Diverticula form when pressure pushes the wall of the colon outward at certain weak points. A diet that is too low in fiber can cause diverticula.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

HOW CAN YOU CARE FOR YOURSELF AT HOME?

- Include fruits, leafy green vegetables, beans and whole grains in your diet each day. These foods are high in fiber.
- Take a fiber supplement, such as Citrucel or Metamucil, every day if needed. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Drink plenty of fluids, enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water. If you have kidney, heart or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling or playing tennis or team sports.
- Cut out foods that cause gas, pain or other symptoms.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CALL FOR HELP?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have belly pain.
- You pass maroon or very bloody stools.
- You have a fever.
- You have nausea or vomiting.
- You have unusual changes in your bowel movements or abdominal swelling.
- You have burning pain when you urinate.
- You have abnormal vaginal discharge.
- You have shoulder pain.
- You have cramping pain that does not get better when you have a bowel movement or pass gas.
- You pass gas or stool from your urethra while urinating.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.