

# Diverticulitis Discharge Information

## What is diverticulitis?

Diverticula are tiny pouches or weak areas that bulge out from the lining of the wall of the intestine (bowel). They look like small thumbs poking out of the side of the intestine. When you have diverticula in your intestines, it is called diverticulosis. When these pouches become inflamed or infected, it is called diverticulitis.

It may be that the main cause of diverticula is too little fiber in the diet. Fiber is the part of fruits, vegetables, and grains that the body cannot digest. Fiber helps make stools soft and easy to pass. It helps prevent constipation. When you have constipation, muscles strain to move stool that is too hard. The high pressure causes the weak spots in the colon to bulge out and become diverticula. The cause of diverticulitis is not known. It may begin when stool or bacteria are caught in the diverticula.

## How can I take care of myself when I go home?

How long it takes to get better depends on your treatment, how well you recover, your overall health, and any complications you may have. You need to make lifestyle changes to be healthier and to help keep from having diverticulitis in the future. Diverticulitis is usually mild and responds well to medical treatment and lifestyle changes.

### Management

- Your provider will give you a list of your medicines when you leave the hospital.
  - Know your medicines. Know what they look like, how much you should take each time, how often you should take them, and why you take each one.
  - Take your medicines exactly as your provider tells you to.
  - Carry a list of your medicines in your wallet or purse. Include any nonprescription medicines and supplements on the list.
- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
  - Treat pain
  - Treat or prevent an infection
  - Prevent side effects, such as nausea or constipation
  - Soften stool and reduce straining with a bowel movement
- If you have had surgery, to care for your incision:
  - Keep your incision clean.
  - If you are told to change your dressing on your incision, wash your hands before changing the dressing and after disposing of the dressing.
- Use a hot water bottle or heating pad on the abdomen for cramps.

## **Appointments**

- Follow your provider's instructions for follow-up appointments.
- Keep appointments for any routine testing you may need.
- Talk with your provider about any questions or fears you have.

## **Diet, Exercise, and Other Lifestyle Changes**

- Follow the treatment plan your healthcare provider prescribes.
- Follow activity restrictions, such as not driving or operating machinery, as recommended by your healthcare provider or pharmacist, especially if you are taking pain medicines.
- Get plenty of rest while you're recovering. Try to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Eat a healthy diet.
  - If you have diarrhea, drink liquids and avoid solid foods. Try to rest until the diarrhea stops.
  - Once you are well, eat regular, nutritious meals containing high-fiber foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods. Many people find fiber supplements, such as Metamucil, Citrucel, or other psyllium products, to be helpful, but in a few cases they make constipation worse.
  - Avoid foods that seem to cause abdominal pain. Foods that are more likely to cause pain are popcorn kernels and other foods that may get stuck in diverticula, such as sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, and nuts. The seeds in tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, strawberries, and raspberries, as well as poppy seeds, are usually harmless. Keeping a food diary may help you remember what you ate a few hours before getting abdominal pain.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine light yellow in color, unless you are told to limit fluids.
- Exercise as your provider recommends.

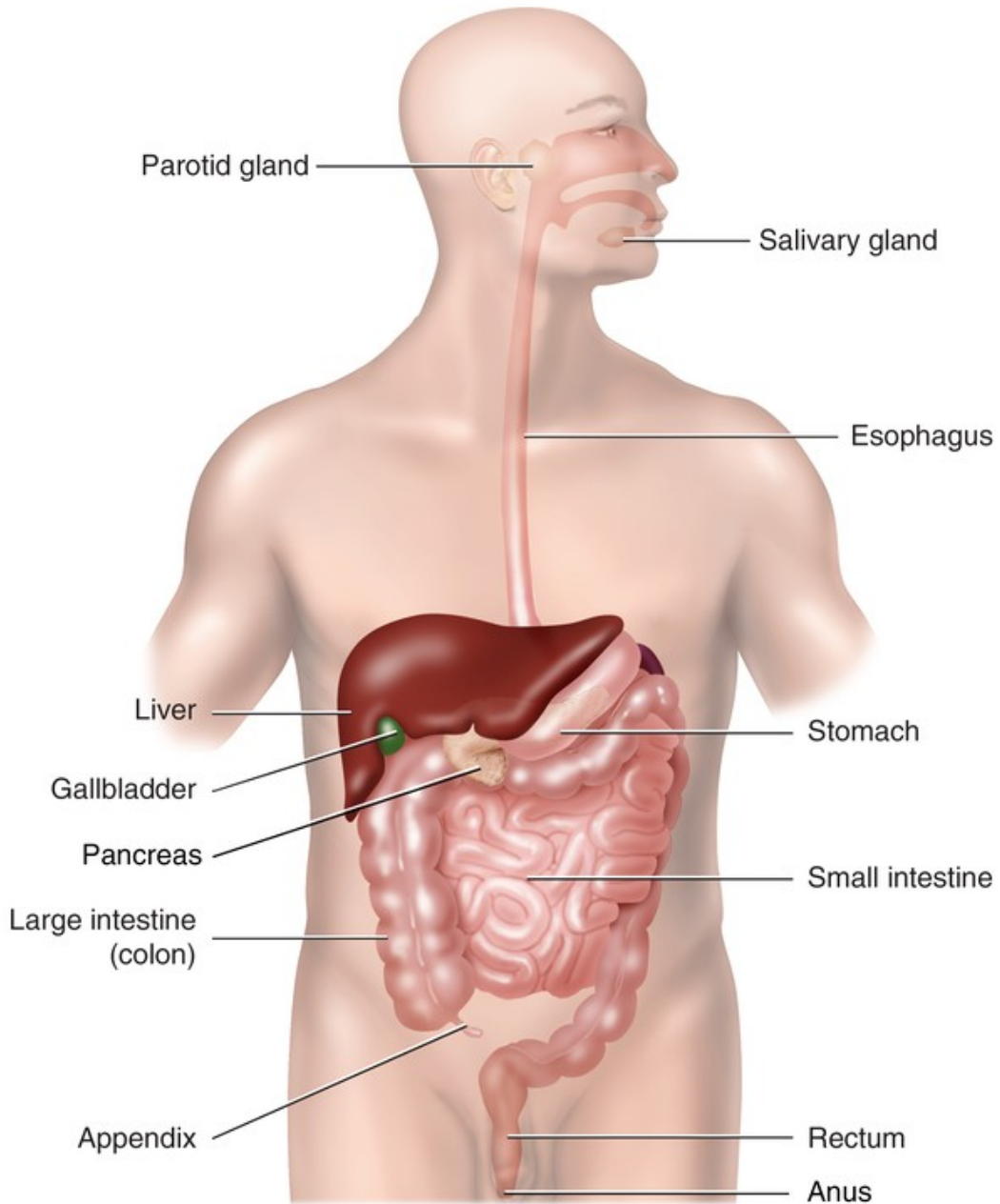
## **Call your healthcare provider if you have new or worsening:**

- Abdominal bloating
- Abdominal pain that goes away and then comes back worse than it was
- Change in bowel habits, such as pain, mucus, diarrhea, constipation, or other intestinal problems
- Pain on the lower left side of your abdomen
- Nausea or vomiting
- Blood in your bowel movement
- Signs of infection around your surgical wound if you had surgery. These include:
  - The area around your wound is more red or painful
  - The wound area is very warm to touch
  - You have blood, pus, or other fluid coming from your wound area
  - You have a fever higher than 101.5° F (38.6° C)
  - You have chills or muscle aches

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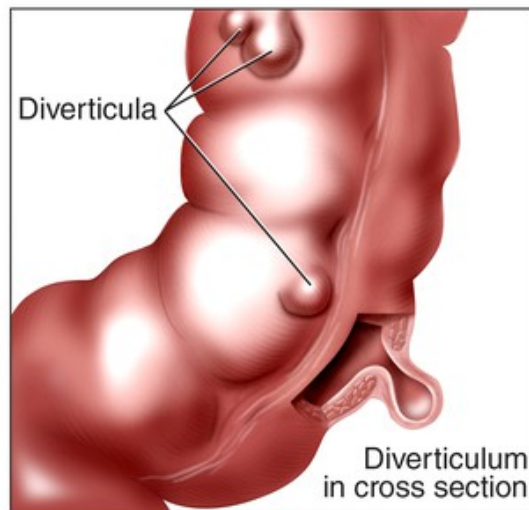
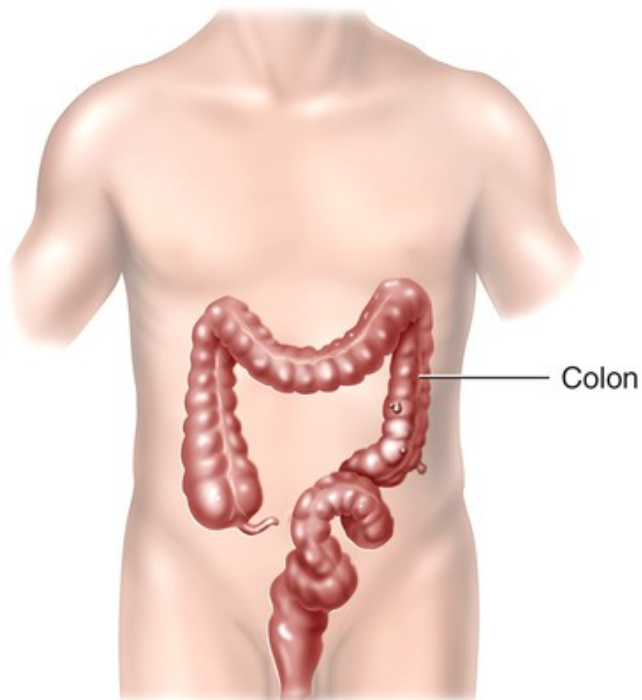
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# Digestive System



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# Diverticulosis



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