



Diverticular disease

You came to the emergency department with tummy pain. The doctor thinks this is caused by diverticular disease, and it is safe to treat at home. This sheet explains what it is and how to care for yourself.

What is it?

Diverticula are small pouches that form in the wall of the large bowel, often as people get older. Many people have them without any symptoms. When a pouch becomes inflamed or infected, it is called diverticulitis. This usually causes pain low on the left side of the tummy, sometimes with fever or a change in bowel habit.

Looking after yourself at home

- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- While the pain is bad, eat light meals or clear fluids, then slowly return to normal food.
- Once you feel better, eat more fibre: fruit, vegetables, wholegrain bread and beans.
- Keep drinking water as you add fibre, to keep your stools soft.
- A warm heat pack on your tummy may ease the pain.

Medicines

- Paracetamol can help with pain, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Avoid ibuprofen and similar anti-inflammatory tablets during a flare, unless your doctor says they are safe.
- If you were given antibiotics, take the full course, even if you feel better.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre in 2 to 3 days if you are not starting to improve.
- Your doctor may arrange a bowel test (colonoscopy or scan) after you recover.
- See your doctor if you notice a lasting change in your bowel habit or weight loss.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Tummy pain that becomes severe, spreads, or makes it hard to move
- Fever with shivering, or feeling very unwell
- Vomiting that does not stop, or being unable to keep fluids down
- A large amount of blood or clots from your bottom
- A hard, swollen tummy, or being unable to pass wind or stool



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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