



# Jacksonville Chiropractic Center

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## DIVERTICULOSIS

### WHAT IS IT?

Diverticulosis, comes from the Latin word diverticulum, meaning a small diversion from the normal path, this occurs when a weak spot in the colon or large intestine yields to pressure from food or gas within the colon. Tiny pockets of the membrane lining of the colon are pushed out from the inside of the intestinal wall to form small sacs, pouches or pockets called diverticula. Diverticula can develop anywhere in the digestive tract but they usually occur in the colon, predominantly in the narrowest part, the sigmoid region.

### IS IT A RARE DISEASE?

In persons under 35, yes. In persons over 40, it is very prevalent, and one of the most common diseases of the colon. At least one-third of all Americans over 45 years of age, and more than two-thirds of those over 60 have diverticulosis. Women are affected more than men.

### HOW SERIOUS A DISORDER IS IT?

While it can be uncomfortable and burdensome, diverticulosis, in itself is not a serious condition. However it can lead to diverticulitis, in which the pockets perforate and become inflamed and infected. Occasionally, the pockets may erode into blood vessels and cause bleeding. Generally, perforation and bleeding of diverticula can be controlled. Sometimes hospitalization and surgical treatment are required to control these complications. Fortunately, with supervision, these complications of diverticulosis can usually be avoided. The condition itself has no direct relation to cancer

### WHAT CAUSES IT?

The precise cause of diverticulosis is obscure. The process of aging and muscle shrinkage may weaken the wall of the colon, allowing the pouches to develop. In most case studies, an abnormal thickening of the muscle wall of the colon has been found and it is thought to contribute to the development of pouches (diverticula). Probably the principle factor in the high incidence of diverticulosis among Americans is low fiber diet consumed in western countries. Africans and Asians living in rural areas who eat plenty of natural fibers, rarely get diverticulosis. With the technological revolution, our food is more and more high refined and over-processed and lacking in natural fiber. Fiber deficiency, a leading cause of constipation, results in small hard stools that do not fill out the colon. The colon then develops areas of spasm which force the pouches through the muscle wall.

### CAN A DIET HIGH IN FIBER PREVENT THIS?

Yes. A high roughage diet will not only prevent the development of diverticulosis but will decrease progression of it once it is established. It will also prevent and correct constipation due to improper diet.

### HOW DOES ONE KNOW HE HAS DIVERTICULOSIS?

Often, the patient doesn't know. Most people, with widespread diverticulosis, have no symptoms. When there are symptoms, they can be gas, stomach cramps and diarrhea alternating with constipation.

### AREN'T THESE SYMPTOMS COMMON IN OTHER DISORDERS?

Yes, including some serious diseases; that is why you went through all those tests. Before making a diagnosis of diverticulosis, we must first exclude all other possible causes of the symptoms. X-ray and instrument examination of the colon will confirm the diagnosis by distinguishing diverticulosis from other disease of the colon with similar symptoms.

### HOW IS IT TREATED?

Treatment of diverticulosis is mainly dietary, increasing the amount of bulk in the stools with the use of Gastrofiber Metafiber Sipperyelm and in some cases bran.

### HOW LONG SHOULD I REMAIN ON A HIGH FIBER DIET?

Permanently for as long as you feel well. The fiber you put back into your normal diet will help to keep your digestive machinery operating at high gear. Gradually the program will become a way of life for you. Most people who go on a high fiber diet experience such a dramatic improvement that they never revert to their old eating habits. The only time to change this diet is in the event of the development of diverticulitis, with perforation of one of the pouches. Then, temporarily treat with antibiotics and low residue diet is necessary. In some cases, when patients do not respond to these measures and complications develop, hospitalization and surgery may be required.

### WHAT ARE MY CHANCES OF DEVELOPING DIVERTICULITIS?

Only about 15% of patients with diverticulosis develop diverticulitis - and the percentage is even smaller for those under medical supervision on a high fiber diet. Only about 10% of patients with diverticulitis require surgery. With prompt treatment, the complications of diverticulitis can usually be controlled. It is important to see your doctor/nutritionist at the first appearance of symptoms abdominal pain and fever