Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Diverticular Disease - Colorectal Surgery

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Diverticular Disease

Patient Information

Colorectal Surgery

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What is Diverticular Disease?

Diverticular disease is a common condition of the large bowel, where the lining of the bowel bulges through the surrounding muscle wall. Each bulge forms a pocket known as diverticulum. When these occur together in a segment of bowel, it is said to represent diverticular disease.

What causes Diverticular Disease?

Diverticular disease is very common in the Western World because the diet tends not to contain enough fibre. The lack of bulk in the faeces causes the bowel to work much harder and this strain causes the lining of the bowel to bulge through the muscular wall.

What symptoms can you expect?

Diverticular disease does not usually cause any symptoms apart from some lower abdominal cramps. Occasionally, it may cause irregular bowel function and constipation.

What is diverticulitis?

Very occasionally a diverticulum may become inflamed or infected. This is a condition known as diverticulitis. It usually presents with lower abdominal pain, bowel irregularity and fever. Such symptoms should be reported to your GP.

What can you do to control your symptoms to prevent diverticulitis?

It is very important to avoid constipation and to ensure regular bowel function. Laxatives should be used with caution as they can worsen the condition. If in doubt, you should consult your GP. A much better way of avoiding constipation is to eat a balanced diet with extra fibre.

- Use wholemeal rather than brown bread as it has a higher fibre content.
- When baking use wholemeal rather than white flour.
- Add unprocessed bran to the diet, either in the dry state or mixed with other foods.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables should be taken at least twice a day.
- Remember that the skins of some fruit and vegetables are often rich in fibre, e.g. apples, pears, tomatoes and potatoes.
- Avoid excessive amounts of sugar, sweet or fatty foods.

Some points to remember

- It will take several weeks for your bowel habits to improve, and the full benefits may not be realised for many months.
- To maintain a healthy lifestyle, regular exercise will complement a balanced diet.
- Your GP will be happy to answer any questions that may arise.



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