

# Tips for preventing diverticulitis

9 August 2019, by Len Canter



Although colonoscopy screens for cancer, it can also uncover a common condition called diverticulosis.

This is when one or more pockets develop in the colon wall, often in the large bowel. These pockets occur over time, possibly from not getting enough fiber in your [diet](#) or eating too much red meat. They're so common that about 50% of people have them by age 50, according to the American Gastroenterological Association.

Problems can occur if a pocket gets infected, swollen and inflamed, which happens to about 5% of people with diverticulosis. This condition is called diverticulitis. "Attacks" of it can come with pain in the lower left abdomen, fever, chills and changes in stool. You may also experience nausea and vomiting.

Treatment for diverticulitis often centers on a short-term low-fiber diet to quiet the [digestive tract](#), and possibly antibiotics to get rid of the [infection](#).

Some people get repeated attacks. There's also

the possibility of developing a serious abscess in a pocket and needing surgery to remove the affected section of intestine if the damage is severe.

But you can take steps to lower the risk for repeated attacks and complications.

After—and only after—the infection clears, slowly reintroduce fiber to your diet by eating more whole grains; legumes including beans and lentils; vegetables; berries; fruits with edible skins; nuts and even popcorn. The goal is 25 grams of fiber a day for women, 38 for men. Replace at least some red meat with poultry and fish. Vigorous cardiovascular exercise also offers some protection.

Also, ask your doctor about any medications that might raise your risk of a flare. These could include [nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs](#) (NSAIDs) like aspirin or ibuprofen. Acetaminophen may be safer for you.

These same steps may help prevent diverticulosis or stop it from progressing to [diverticulitis](#).

**More information:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines list [top fiber sources](#).

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APA citation: Tips for preventing diverticulitis (2019, August 9) retrieved 10 October 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-08-diverticulitis.html>

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