



Diverticulosis and diverticulitis: a short guide

Patient information | Source check: 2026-10-15

Pockets are not the same as inflammation

Diverticula are small pouches opening from the colon. Diverticulosis means the pockets are present. Most people have no symptoms and need no specific treatment. They are not polyps or cancer. Diverticulitis means a pouch and nearby tissue have become inflamed.

New symptoms need assessment

New constant abdominal pain, tenderness, fever, vomiting or a change in bowel motions should be assessed. Pain is often on the lower left but can occur on the right. Your clinician may arrange blood tests or a CT scan. Do not assume every symptom comes from known diverticula.

Treatment is individual

Not every uncomplicated attack needs antibiotics. The choice depends on how unwell you are, your immunity and other health concerns. Follow the treating team's instructions for pain relief, food and fluids. If managed at home, confirm a review, usually within about 48 hours. Return sooner if you worsen.

When you are well

I recommend a balanced diet with fruit, vegetables and whole grains. Increase fibre gradually if needed. Sometimes soluble fibre such as psyllium husk can be helpful too. Nuts, seeds and popcorn usually do not need to be avoided. Whether a colonoscopy is needed after an attack depends on your symptoms, scan and previous examination.

Get urgent help

Diverticular bleeding can happen without pain and can be brisk. Seek urgent assessment for heavy bleeding, severe pain, persistent vomiting, inability to keep fluids down or faintness. Call 111 for collapse, heavy bleeding with faintness or if you cannot travel safely.

Call 111 for an ambulance if you collapse, have heavy bleeding with faintness, or are too unwell to travel safely. Do not wait for a routine appointment or an email reply.

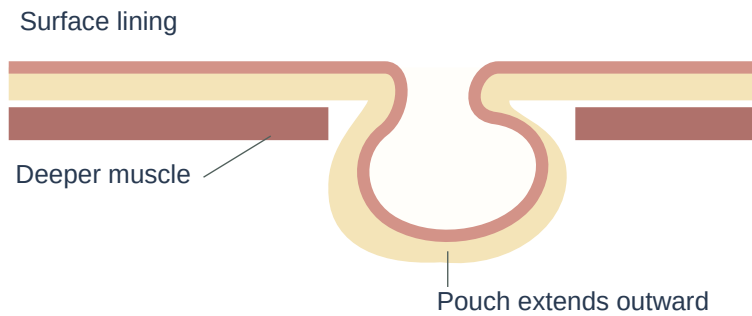




A pouch and an inflamed pouch are different

Diverticulosis

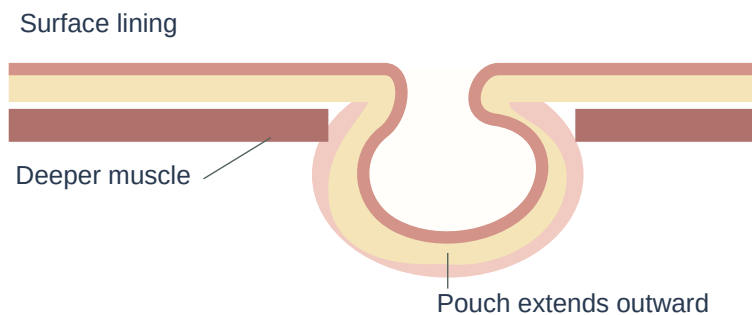
Inside the bowel (lumen)



The inner lining and supporting layer push outward through a weak point in the deeper muscle. Many people have pouches without symptoms.

Diverticulitis

Inside the bowel (lumen)



One or more pouches become inflamed. Rarely, an inflamed pouch can perforate (split open), causing serious infection and requiring hospital admission.

Read this illustration alongside the advice in this guide.

