



Diverticulosis

During your colonoscopy the gastroenterologist found diverticula. Diverticula are pockets in the colon. This condition is quite common. Over 50% of adults over age 50, and over 75% of adults over age 75 have this condition. Diverticulitis means that one diverticulum became infected. **Most people with diverticulosis never get diverticulitis.**

We are not sure the cause of the colon developing these diverticula (pockets) and we are not sure what causes one to become infected (diverticulitis). It is commonly believed that a high fiber diet helps the condition, but no one knows for sure.

We now know that when someone has diverticulosis without diverticulitis, all foods are allowed. Specifically, as long as there is no diverticulitis present, nuts, popcorn, seeds, corn, etc. are permitted. Even if someone had an attack of diverticulitis in the past, all foods are allowed when the person has fully recovered.

When diverticulitis does occur, the infection may be mild and require antibiotic therapy only. If the attack is severe, the doctor will recommend hospitalization and sometimes even emergency surgery. Sometimes emergency surgery is done in steps, with the first step requiring a colostomy “bag” that is reversed in subsequent surgery. Surgery for diverticulitis requires removal of the part of the colon that contains the infected diverticula. It is rare that diverticulitis recurs after surgery.

Surgery may also be recommended for people who have recurrent mild attacks of diverticulitis, or for people who have had one severe attack, even if they got better with just antibiotics. Your doctor will recommend the best treatment for you.

Diverticulosis does not cause colon cancer. Aside from diverticulitis, diverticula can cause other problems. One problem is severe intestinal bleeding. This requires hospitalization, and often transfusions and sometimes surgery.

Please speak to your doctor if you have any questions about this condition. This information sheet is just an outline of the condition.