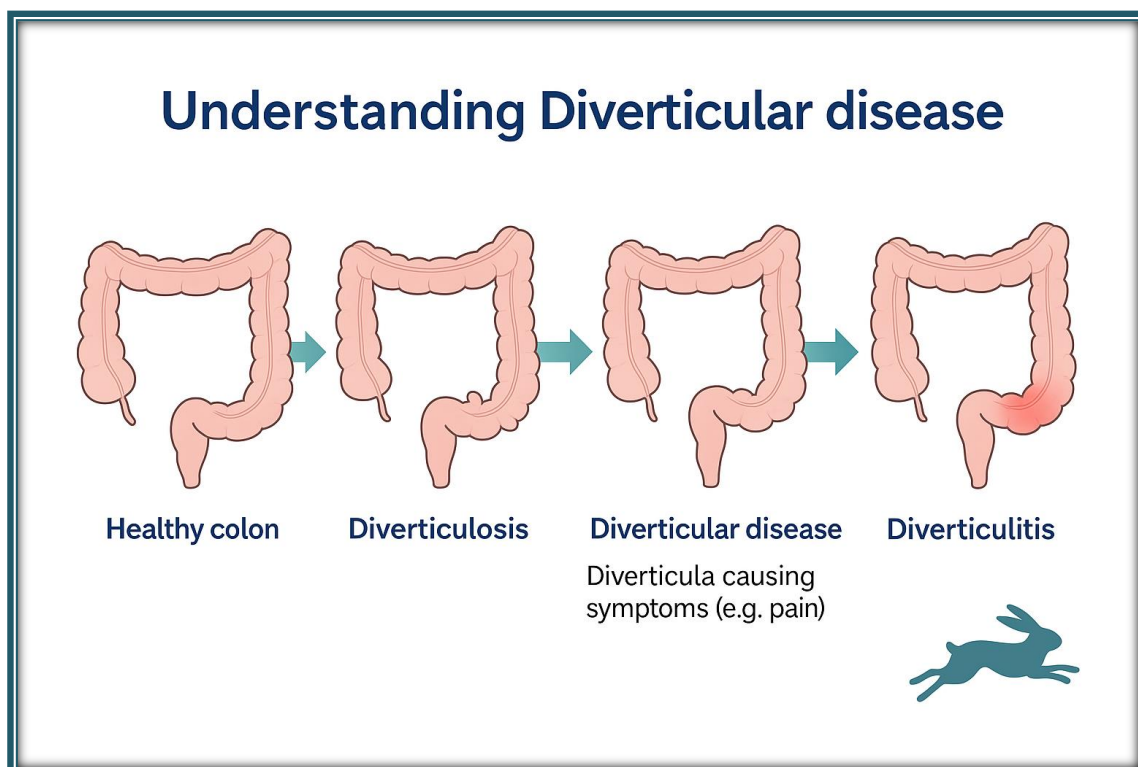


## DIVERTICULAR DISEASE AND DIVERTICULITIS

### What is diverticular disease?

As we age, small bulges (pockets) called diverticula can form in the wall of the large bowel (colon), especially on the left side.

- Diverticulosis = diverticula but no symptoms
- Diverticular disease = diverticula with symptoms like pain or bloating
- Diverticulitis = diverticula become inflamed or infected



Over 1 in 2 people over 60 will have diverticula, though many never have any symptoms.

## What causes it?

The cause is ***not*** fully understood. Risk factors include:

- Age >40
- Low fibre intake (possible link)
- Obesity
- Inactivity
- Smoking
- Certain rare connective tissue conditions

Old advice to avoid nuts, seeds, popcorn and fruit skins is no longer recommended.

## What are the symptoms?

### ***Diverticular disease:***

- *Crampy or aching pain* (often lower left side)
- *Bloating and excess wind*
- *Constipation, diarrhoea, or alternating bowel habit*

### ***Diverticulitis:***

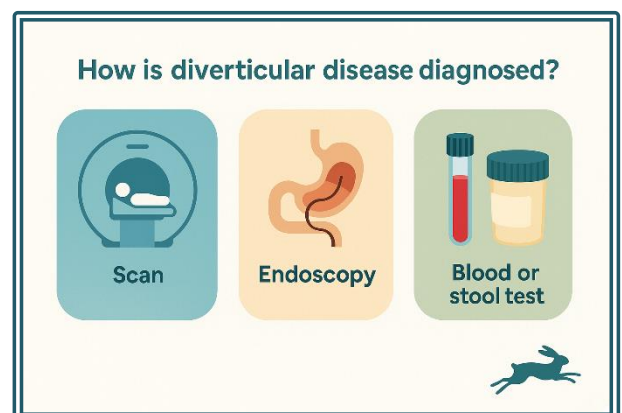
- *More severe, constant pain* (lower tummy)
- *Fever, nausea or vomiting*
- *Tenderness*
- *Blood or mucus in stools*

## How is it diagnosed?

You may be diagnosed after a scan or bowel test:

- CT scan
- Colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy
- Blood tests or stool samples

Diverticula are often found by chance on scans.



# How can I manage diverticular disease?

The best approach is healthy lifestyle + high-fibre diet.



## ***1. Increase fibre intake gradually***

Target: 25–30g fibre daily

- Wholemeal or seeded breads
- Wholegrain cereals (Weetabix, Bran Flakes, porridge)
- Brown rice, wholegrain pasta
- Potatoes with skins
- Lentils, beans, peas
- Fresh, tinned, or dried fruit
- Vegetables and salad

TIP: Increase fibre over 2–3 weeks to reduce bloating or cramping.

## ***2. Drink plenty of fluids***

Fibre acts like a sponge; without fluids, constipation can worsen.

Aim for 6–8 glasses daily (1.5–2 litres) of water or squash. Avoid fizzy drinks.

## ***3. Stay active***

Gentle regular movement helps bowel function.

Walking, gardening, yoga, or cycling are all good options.

#### **4. Maintain a healthy weight**

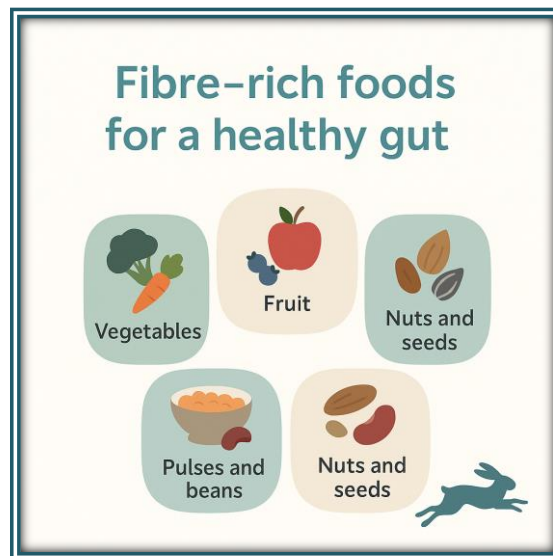
Maintaining a healthy weight and stopping smoking may help your general health and reduce the risk of flare-ups.

#### **5. Do not avoid these foods**

You can safely eat:

- Nuts
- Seeds
- Popcorn
- Fruit skins

(Unless they worsen IBS-type symptoms for you individually.)



## **What happens in diverticulitis?**

Mild diverticulitis can often be treated at home:

- Antibiotics if prescribed
- Low-fibre or soft diet for a few days
- Avoid anti-inflammatories like ibuprofen unless advised

Severe cases may require hospital care for:

- Abscesses
- Blockage
- Perforation (very rare)
- Heavy bleeding (1 in 3 improve without treatment)

## **Are probiotics helpful?**

Probiotics are not routinely recommended for diverticular disease or diverticulitis. There is currently no strong evidence that they prevent symptoms or flare-ups of diverticular disease. However, if you have been prescribed antibiotics (for any reason), some people choose to take probiotics to help reduce the risk of diarrhoea. There is some evidence this may help, and probiotics are generally safe for most people.

If you would like to know more, please see our *CHG Probiotics Patient Information Leaflet*, available on our website or from reception.

## Will it come back?

Diverticular disease (the presence of pouches in the bowel) does not go away. Most people with diverticular disease will never develop diverticulitis (inflammation or infection). If you have had diverticulitis, the risk of another episode is low. Most people recover fully and do not experience further problems.

- No regular colonoscopy follow-up is needed unless advised for another reason.

## When to seek urgent help

Call 111 or go to A&E if:

- Pain is severe or worsening
- You have a high fever or vomiting
- You feel faint, dizzy, or very unwell
- You pass large amounts of blood

## Further information

- **NHS: Diverticular disease**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diverticular-disease-and-diverticulitis/>
- **Guts UK: Diverticular disease**  
<https://gutscharity.org.uk/advice-and-information/conditions/diverticular-disease/>
- **British Dietetic Association: Fibre**  
<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/fibre.html>

### When to seek urgent help

**Mild stable symptoms**  
Continue self-care

**Worsening discomfort or pain**  
Contact GP

**Severe pain, fever, large blood loss**  
Call 111 or attend A&E immediately



## If you have further questions

- **Visit:** [www.cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk/contact-us](http://www.cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk/contact-us) and fill out our triage form
- **Call us:** 01285 653198 or 01285 652122
- **Call NHS 111** if you need urgent medical advice (24/7)
- **Call 999** in an emergency

