

Diverticular disease

Information for patients

This information sheet explains what diverticular disease is, the causes and how to prevent it.

Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your **name** and **date of birth** and check your **ID band**. If you don't have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address.

If we don't ask these questions, then please ask us to check.
Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

What is Diverticular disease?

This is a very common condition affecting the large bowel or colon. Small bulges or pockets (diverticula) develop in the lining of the intestine. Diverticulitis is when these pockets become inflamed or infected.

What causes Diverticular disease?

Diverticular disease is common and associated with ageing. The large intestine becomes weaker with age, and the pressure of hard stools passing through the large intestine is thought to cause the bulges to form. It is estimated that 5% of people have diverticula by the time that they are 40 years old, and at least 50% of people have them by the time that they are 80 years old.

What is Diverticulitis?

The majority of people with diverticular will not have any symptoms; this is known as Diverticulosis. Only a few people who have diverticular disease develop Diverticulitis. This is when a Diverticulum (a single pocket) becomes blocked with a hard piece of stool and an infection develops inside. Symptoms of Diverticulitis tend to be more serious and include:

- More severe abdominal pain, especially on the left side
- High temperature (fever) of 38C or above
- Diarrhoea or frequent bowel movements.

Treating Diverticular disease and Diverticulitis

A high-fibre diet can often ease symptoms of Diverticular disease and paracetamol can be used to relieve pain. Other painkillers such as Aspirin or Ibuprofen are not recommended for regular use as they can cause stomach upsets. Mild Diverticulitis can usually be treated at home with antibiotics prescribed by your GP (home doctor). More serious cases may need hospital treatment.

Preventing Diverticular disease and Diverticulitis

Eating a high-fibre diet may help to prevent Diverticular disease and should improve your symptoms. Your diet should be balanced and include at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day, plus whole grains. You may find that eating nuts, corn and seeds cause symptoms, as they could block the diverticular openings and cause Diverticulitis. These foods should be avoided if you find that these cause or aggravate symptoms.

Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS
Tel: 020 3299 3601 Email: kch-tr.pals@nhs.net

You can also contact us by using our online form at www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND
Tel: 01689 863252 Email: kch-tr.palskent@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.

PL765.1 December 2016
Review date December 2019
Corporate Comms: 1619