

# Exploring the Uncommon Aspects in the Large Colon due to Diverticulitis

Chen Feng\*

Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Chang Gung University, Taoyuan, Taiwan

## DESCRIPTION

Diverticulitis is a common digestive condition characterized by the inflammation or infection of small pouches called diverticula that form in the lining of the colon. These pouches are known as diverticula, and the condition itself is called diverticulosis. When these diverticula become inflamed or infected, it leads to diverticulitis. This condition primarily affects the large intestine or colon, specifically the sigmoid colon, which is the lower part of the colon located on the left side of the abdomen. Diverticula are typically formed due to increased pressure within the colon, causing weak spots in the colon wall to bulge out and form pouches. The exact cause of diverticulosis and diverticulitis is not fully understood, but it is believed to be influenced by multiple factors, including age, diet, lifestyle, and genetics.

Diverticulosis is a common condition, especially in older adults. It is estimated that by the age of 60, about 50% of individuals will have diverticula in their colon. However, not everyone with diverticulosis will develop diverticulitis. Diverticulitis occurs when the diverticula become inflamed or infected. The exact mechanisms that lead to inflammation and infection are not completely clear, but it is thought to involve the trapping of fecal matter or bacteria within the diverticula, leading to an immune response and subsequent inflammation.

The symptoms of diverticulitis can vary in severity, ranging from mild to severe. Common symptoms include abdominal pain, usually localized in the lower left side of the abdomen, along with tenderness and bloating. Other symptoms may include fever, nausea, vomiting, constipation, diarrhea, and changes in bowel habits. In severe cases, complications such as abscess formation, perforation of the colon, or fistula formation (abnormal connections between different parts of the intestine or between the intestine and other organs) may occur, requiring immediate medical attention.

The diagnosis of diverticulitis typically involves a combination of medical history, physical examination, and diagnostic tests. The healthcare provider will inquire about the patient's symptoms and perform a physical examination to assess the abdomen for tenderness, swelling, or other signs of inflammation. Various diagnostic tests may be ordered to confirm the diagnosis and assess the severity of the condition. These tests may include blood

tests to check for signs of infection or inflammation, imaging studies such as Computed Tomography (CT) scans or ultrasound, and in some cases, a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy to visualize the inside of the colon.

The treatment approach for diverticulitis depends on the severity of the condition. Mild cases of diverticulitis can often be managed with conservative measures, including rest, a clear liquid diet, and oral antibiotics to treat the infection. Pain medication and bowel rest may also be recommended to help alleviate symptoms and allow the colon to heal. In more severe cases, hospitalization may be required for intravenous antibiotics and closer monitoring. Surgery may be necessary for complicated diverticulitis cases or recurrent episodes that do not respond to conservative treatment.

Prevention and management of diverticulosis and diverticulitis involve lifestyle modifications and dietary changes. A high-fiber diet is often recommended to help soften the stool and prevent constipation, which can reduce the pressure within the colon. Foods rich in fiber include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. Adequate hydration is also essential to maintain regular bowel movements. In some cases, healthcare providers may suggest avoiding certain foods that may irritate the digestive system, such as nuts, seeds, and popcorn, although the evidence supporting these restrictions is limited.

Regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight are also important in the prevention of diverticulitis. Exercise helps promote regular bowel movements and reduces the risk of constipation. It also contributes to overall digestive health and can help prevent diverticula formation by reducing pressure within the colon. Additionally, smoking cessation is crucial, as smoking has been associated with an increased risk of developing diverticulitis and other gastrointestinal conditions. Quitting smoking not only benefits the digestive system but also improves overall health.

In terms of managing diverticulosis and preventing diverticulitis, it's essential to adopt a healthy lifestyle. This includes:

1. Eating a high-fiber diet: Consuming foods rich in fiber helps maintain regular bowel movements and prevents constipation. It is recommended to include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and other high-fiber foods in the diet.

**Correspondence to:** Chen Feng, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Chang Gung University, Taoyuan, Taiwan, E-mail: chenfung@gmail.com

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2. **Staying hydrated:** Drinking an adequate amount of water and fluids helps keep the stool soft and promotes regular bowel movements. Aim for about 8 glasses of water per day, or more if necessary.
3. **Exercising regularly:** Engaging in regular physical activity, such as walking, jogging, or other forms of exercise, promotes healthy digestion and reduces the risk of constipation.
4. **Stress:** Stress can worsen digestive symptoms and trigger flare-ups. Finding effective stress management techniques, such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or engaging in hobbies, can be beneficial.
5. **Avoiding certain foods:** While the evidence is limited, some healthcare providers may recommend avoiding foods with small seeds, nuts, or popcorn to reduce the risk of

complications or irritation. However, it is best to consult with a healthcare professional for personalized dietary advice.

It's important to note that if one has diverticulosis or have experienced diverticulitis in the past, it's crucial to follow the healthcare provider's recommendations and attend regular check-ups to monitor the condition. The healthcare provider can provide personalized guidance based on the specific situation and help in managing the condition effectively. In summary, adopting a healthy lifestyle, including a high-fiber diet, regular exercise, stress management, and avoiding smoking, can help prevent diverticulitis and manage diverticulosis. It's important to work closely with a healthcare professional to develop a personalized plan that suits the needs and reduces the risk of complications.