

### Dear Patient:

Diverticula are small sacs or pouches that form through the wall of the colon. When these diverticula become inflamed or infected, you have diverticulitis. Symptoms include rectal bleeding, abdominal pain, gas, nausea, or fever. No one can say for sure why the diverticula become inflamed but the most accepted reason is that high pressure causes a tiny rupture in one of them, allowing bacteria from the colon to infect other tissues in the body.

Diverticulitis can vary from a minor inflammation on your colon to a massive infection requiring immediate surgery. This is why it is important to see your doctor quickly if you suspect you have diverticulitis.

### Testing and Monitoring

Your doctor will order a medical examination which may include some or all of the following:

1. Blood tests
2. Examination of your abdomen for tenderness
3. X-rays of your colon
4. Colonoscopy

### Treatment

Your doctor may treat your diverticulitis with one or all of the following:

- **A Course of Antibiotics** – Antibiotics are given to treat your infection.
- **Special Diet** – Your diet will usually consist of clear liquids and will gradually be increased to a low fiber (residue) diet during your hospital stay. This will allow your colon to rest (reduce its contractions) and heal. Once you have improved, you will gradually be changed to a high-fiber diet.
- **Intravenous Fluids (IV)** – Intravenous fluids replace body fluids directly into the blood stream.
- **Activity** - You will be encouraged to be up in the chair and walk in the halls 4-5 times a day or as your doctor orders.

### General Information

You can avoid diverticulosis or delay its development by decreasing the pressure inside your colon by doing the following:

- **Eat more fiber** – Eat whole grain products, fruits, and vegetables. A high-fiber diet helps stool move through your colon and promotes regular bowel movements.

- **Add bulk-forming laxatives** – If unable to consume fiber each day consider using psyllium (Perdiem, Metamucil, and others) or methylcellulose (Cologel, or Citrucel). These bulk-forming laxatives can be purchased at your local drug store without a prescription. Add fiber to your diet slowly to avoid experiencing painful gas.
- **Drink plenty of fluids** – Drink at least 8 cups of liquids a day. High-fiber diets require drinking plenty of fluids because fiber acts like a sponge. If you do not drink enough fluids, you will become constipated.
- **Listen to your body** – Do not put off having a bowel movement. This can lead to a firmer stool which requires more force to pass. The more force, the greater the pressure in the colon.

Once diverticula have formed in your colon they are there for life. By making a few simple changes in your lifestyle they are usually not a problem.