

# Diverticular Disease: Diagnosis and Management in Christchurch

## What is the difference between Diverticulosis and Diverticulitis?

Diverticulosis is a common condition, where the inner lining of bowel pushes outwards forming small pouches or pockets. Most people with diverticulosis do not have any symptoms. When these pouches become inflamed, it is known as diverticulitis. About 4% of people with diverticulosis go on to develop diverticulitis. It can cause various symptoms including pain, fever, change in bowel habits. While diverticulosis is common as we age, acute diverticulitis requires medical evaluation.

## How common is it to have Diverticular Disease?

Diverticulosis is very common as we age and is found nearly in about half of people over 60, and nearly everyone by age 80.

## How do I know if I have Diverticulitis?

Since symptoms are rare, Diverticulosis is often diagnosed incidentally during colonoscopy or CT scan while investigating other conditions.

## How is diverticulosis treated?

The good news is that the pouches themselves are usually harmless. Treatment is focussed on keeping bowels moving easily, which reduces risk of developing complications related to diverticulosis.

- High Fibre nutrition: Aim for a daily intake of 25 to 35 grams of fibre. Following are examples of food products high in fibre.
- Gradual implementation: If you are increasing your fibre intake, do so gradually over 2 to 3 weeks. This allows your digestive system to adjust and reduces the likelihood of temporary bloating or gas.
- Fluid Intake: Fibre acts like a sponge; it requires significant water to be effective. Aim for 8 to 10 glasses of water daily to ensure the fibre does not cause constipation.

## What are the examples of high fibre diet?

Food Group	Examples
Whole Grains	Oats, barley, brown rice, whole-grain pasta, and quinoa.
Legumes & Pulses	Lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans, and split peas.
Vegetables	Broccoli, carrots, Brussels sprouts, and potatoes (with skin).
Fruits	Pears, apples, berries, and oranges.
Seeds & Nuts	Chia seeds, ground flaxseeds, almonds, and walnuts.

## When to seek urgent medical attention?

While diverticulosis is often silent, certain symptoms indicate serious complications such as infection (sepsis), an abscess, or a bowel perforation. **Please seek immediate medical review if you experience any of the following:**

- High fever, chills, rapid heartbeat, or feeling unusually confused, weak, or dizzy.
- Severe, constant pain in the puku (tummy).
- Severe cramping, persistent vomiting, an inability to pass gas or stool (constipation), and a visibly bloated or distended abdomen.
- If you notice air or faecal matter passing through the urine (pneumaturia/faecaluria) or vagina, this may indicate a fistula (an abnormal connection between the bowel and other organs) and requires urgent specialist assessment.

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