Diagnosis of Diverticulitis

The actual diagnosis of diverticulosis is when a person has diverticula in their intestinal tract. Diverticula are small pouches that have been forced into the wall lining of the digestive tract system. They occur when the inner layer of the digestive tract has excessive pressure from waste coming through which will then cause bulging through weak spots into the outer layer. Imagine taking a fist full of silly putty and squeezing your hand shut, the pressure causes it to escape through the weak spots between the fingers.

These marble sized pouches typically form where the blood vessels run through the intestinal wall. Diverticula can happen anywhere from the mouth all the way to the anus, however the majority of them occur in the colon area aka large intestine and they typically form on the lower left section of the colon, just above the rectum. This is the area that the waste from the body had become solid and if not enough fiber and fluids are in the body, this is where the effects of constipation take over.

When we have these diverticula pouches we are then diagnosed with diverticulosis. And because diverticulosis does not usually have any symptoms the majority of all people are not even aware that they have the disease. It is typically found during an intestinal exam that may be performed for many other reasons.

These tests may include:

- Barium enema x-ray
- Colonoscopy exam
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy

For others it may be discovered during a surgery for a subsequent issue. Click here to see what diverticula look like.

Diverticulosis is a very common condition in the United States and other developed and industrialized countries where the main diet is typically lower in fiber and very high in processed foods. It is found substantially less in areas such as Africa and Asia where their diets consist of much higher fiber content along with fresh fruits and vegetables.

It is primarily found in people over 50; however there are even a few people in their 20’s with the condition. The statistics are amazing, over 50% of the population of 60 and older have it and it is believed that everyone older than 80 has it, while only about 10% of the population of people 40 and younger have developed the condition.

The comforting part is that only about 15 – 25% of all people with diverticulosis will actually develop diverticulitis, and with more information and public awareness our goal is to get those numbers down. It is of the utmost importance to stay very proactive in your daily health routine, and it doesn’t have to be complicated or time consuming to do it. Just keep going with good
healthy habits or begin to find some by eating a diet high in fiber, simple exercise, reduced daily stress, and becoming more aware than ever of your body’s functions and happenings. Not only will you keep your intestinal tract happy and content, but the rest of your mind and body will benefit too.