

# Diverticulitis is real medical emergency

Dear Joe:

My mother (age 72) lives with me. My reason for writing is to flout out more about her most recent health problem. She has diverticulitis that periodically leads to diverticulitis. Would you please discuss these two conditions in your column?

T.J., Victoria

Dear Miss J.:

Diverticulitis occurs when tiny pouches or hernias form in the bowel. For the most part this condition (which is not a disease) does not have any symptoms.

Diverticulitis, on the other hand, is

the inflammation of these pouches. The symptoms of acute diverticulitis are similar to appendicitis, and emergency medical treatment is needed. Chronic diverticulitis, experienced more often by people your

gerontology

A. Jolayne  
Farrell

mother's age, presents with symptoms of constipation and periodic gripping abdominal pain. Over time, for some, the wall of the bowel thickens, which can produce a bowel obstruction — also a medical emergency.

Diverticulitis is pretty well a

problem of older adults. It is rarely seen in persons under age 35, while in every 10 persons over age 40 has the condition, and about one in two are affected over age 60. It is unfortunate, but since the condition is so common in the older age group, many diagnose themselves — a practice that is dangerous for any health problem.

To head off diverticulitis, it is important that your mother avoid getting constipated. The best way to do this is to eat a diet that is rich in fiber. Her daily diet should include the recommended daily amount of dietary fiber (30 to 45 grams) — found in fresh fruit, raw vegetables

and wheat bran. Generally, laxatives are not recommended for either of these conditions because they are too irritating to the bowel.

Miss J., diverticulitis is something that most people your mother's age learn to live with. So with some help and support from you with her diet, she should do well.

Dear Joe:

All my life I've had low blood pressure. It has stayed at around 90 over 50 for as long as I can remember. My question is: Can low blood pressure be as serious as high blood pressure?

Mr. S.C.

Healthy Senior (I Think)

Dear Mr. C.:

Low blood pressure, also known as hypotension, is not in itself a disease. Sometimes, but rarely, it can be a symptom of an underlying medical problem.

Having low blood pressure is something to be proud of. Many people like you, Mr. C., maintain a low blood pressure throughout life and have no ill effects. In fact such blood pressure readings seem to go along with good health and a long life.

Readers can write to Jolayne Farrell at 11 Cynthia Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4E 1J3.

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