



Weill Cornell Medical College

ClinicalKey®

Patient Education:

Meckel Diverticulum

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Meckel Diverticulum

Meckel diverticulum is an abnormal pouch in your small intestine. It is usually present since birth (*congenital abnormality*). The small intestine is the part of the digestive tract that receives food from your stomach. A Meckel diverticulum forms in the lower part of the small intestine.

During pregnancy, a duct connects the small intestine to the cord that nourishes and supports a developing baby (*umbilical cord*). Normally, this duct disconnects and disappears after the second month of pregnancy. If part of the duct remains attached to the small intestine, it can form a Meckel diverticulum pouch. In some cases, there may also be abnormal tissues in the pouch. These tissues may be similar to tissues in your pancreas or stomach.

CAUSES

Meckel diverticulum is caused by a duct defect in the small intestine.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

In most people, Meckel diverticulum never causes symptoms. Symptoms occur when the diverticulum causes bleeding or inflammation. Symptoms can also result if there is a perforation (*hole*) or obstruction (*blockage*) in the intestine. Symptoms may include:

- Stomach pain.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Constipation.
- Fever.
- Bloating.
- Bloody stools.

DIAGNOSIS

Your health care provider may diagnose Meckel diverticulum during an imaging study you are having done for another digestive problem. Your health care provider may suspect Meckel diverticulum if you have signs and symptoms of the condition. Your health care provider will do a physical exam. This may include imaging tests, such as:

- A technetium scan (*Meckel scan*). In this test, the chemical element technetium is injected into your bloodstream. Then you have a type of X-ray to check whether the technetium fills the Meckel diverticulum pouch.
- A CT scan.

TREATMENT

Treatment of Meckel diverticulum depends on your symptoms. If you do not have symptoms, treatment may not be necessary. If you have bleeding, your health care provider may recommend surgery to remove the diverticulum and possibly a small section of your small intestine.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have a fever.
- You become constipated.
- Your symptoms get worse.
- You develop new symptoms.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have severe abdominal pain.
- You have persistent vomiting.
- You have dark or bright red blood in your stools.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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