RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

LARGE INTESTINE

Exercise decreases risk of diverticular complications

Vigorous physical activity, particularly running, lowers the risk of diverticulitis and diverticular bleeding, Strate and colleagues report.

“One of the central challenges in the management of diverticular disease is identifying the subset of individuals with diverticulosis who are at risk of complications”, comments Strate, who collaborated on this project with colleagues from the Harvard School of Public Health. The team assessed relationships between level and type of physical activity and diverticular complications over an 18-year period in a large ($n = 47,228$), prospective study of male health-care professionals who had no diverticular disease at study outset.

Vigorous activity was inversely linked to diverticulitis and diverticular bleeding. The investigators found that men in the highest quintile of physical activity (≥ 57.4

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metabolic-equivalent hours weekly) had reductions of 25% and 46% in the risk of diverticulitis and diverticular bleeding compared with those in the lowest quintile (≤ 8.2 metabolic-equivalent hours weekly). As Strate notes, “...unlike in many other disorders where modest activity is beneficial, the effect of physical activity on

diverticular complications seems to be largely due to vigorous activity”. Running was the only individual activity associated with a significantly decreased risk of complications.

This research suggests that exercise might have a role in the prevention of diverticular complications. The team plan to take their work forward by looking for other potential risk factors for diverticular complications. “We intend to look at other potential risk factors in men and to confirm our findings in women. Ultimately, we hope to be able to identify at-risk individuals and intervene to prevent complications,” explains Strate.

Rachel Jones

Original article Strate, L. L. *et al.* Physical activity decreases diverticular complications. *Am. J. Gastroenterol.* **104**, 1221–1230 (2009).