Selective Additional Key Points: Nursing Management: Lower Gastrointestinal Problems

- **Fecal incontinence** is the involuntary passage of stool.
- Fecal incontinence occurs when the normal structures that maintain continence are disrupted.
- Prevention and treatment of fecal incontinence may be managed by implementing a bowel training program.

- **Gastroenteritis** is an inflammation of the mucosa of the stomach and small intestine.
- Clinical manifestations include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, and distention.
- Most cases are self-limiting and do not require hospitalization.
- If the causative agent is identified, appropriate antibiotic and antimicrobial drugs are given.
- Symptomatic nursing care is given for nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

- **Crohn’s disease** and **ulcerative colitis** are immunologically related disorders that are referred to as **inflammatory bowel disease** (IBD).
  - Ulcerative colitis usually starts in the rectum and moves in a continual fashion toward the cecum. Although there is sometimes mild inflammation in the terminal ileum, ulcerative colitis is a disease of the colon and rectum.
  - Crohn’s disease can occur anywhere in the GI tract from the mouth to the anus, but occurs most commonly in the terminal ileum and colon. The inflammation involves all layers of the bowel wall with segments of normal bowel occurring between diseased portions, the so-called “skip lesions.”
  - With Crohn’s disease, diarrhea and colicky abdominal pain are common symptoms. If the small intestine is involved, weight loss occurs due to **malabsorption**. In addition, patients may have systemic symptoms such as fever.
  - The primary symptoms of ulcerative colitis are bloody diarrhea and abdominal pain.
  - The goals of treatment for IBD include rest the bowel, control the inflammation, combat infection, correct malnutrition, alleviate stress, provide symptomatic relief, and improve quality of life.

- The majority of patients with **diverticular** disease are asymptomatic.
- Symptomatic diverticular disease can be further broken down into the following:
  - Painful diverticular disease
  - Diverticulitis (inflammation of the diverticuli)
- Complications of diverticulitis include perforation with peritonitis.
- A **high-fiber** diet, mainly from fruits and vegetables, and decreased intake of fat and red meat are recommended for preventing diverticular disease.

- Three factors necessary for the development of **celiac disease** (gluten intolerance) are genetic predisposition, gluten ingestion, and an immune-mediated response.
- Celiac disease is treated with lifelong avoidance of dietary gluten. Wheat, barley, oats, and rye products must be avoided.

- The symptoms of **lactose intolerance** include bloating, flatulence, cramping abdominal pain, and diarrhea. They usually occur within 30 minutes to several hours after drinking a glass of milk or ingesting a milk product.
- Treatment consists of eliminating lactose from the diet by avoiding milk and milk products and/or replacement of lactase with commercially available preparations.