

Eating Guidelines for Diverticular Disease

Information About Diverticular Disease

Diverticula are small pouches or sacs that form in the wall of the colon (large intestine).

Diverticulosis means having *diverticula* without any symptoms. If you have diverticular disease with symptoms such as pain in your lower abdomen and a change in your bowel habits it's called **diverticular disease**.

Diverticulitis is when the pouches or sacs in the colon become inflamed or infected. If you have diverticulitis you may need to take medicine and stay in the hospital for a while. A liquid diet might be needed for a short period to give your bowel a rest. Once your symptoms improve, you can slowly start to eat more solids and in time return to a high fibre diet.

You should report symptoms of diverticulitis (constant pain, fever, and diarrhea) to your doctor.



Steps You Can Take

The following steps you can take may help you prevent or control your diverticular disease.

- Enjoy a healthy diet that includes a wide variety of foods.
- Eat plenty of high fibre foods to get the recommended amount of fibre:

Gender	Age	Recommended fibre amount per day
Men	19 - 50	38 grams
Men	>50	30 grams
Women	19 - 50	25 grams
Women	>50	21 grams

- Foods that are high in fibre include whole grain and bran cereals, whole grain bread, crackers and noodles, brown rice, lentils and dried beans, and fruits and vegetables.
- The kind of fibre in fruits and vegetables may prevent diverticula from forming and make symptoms of diverticulitis less severe. Aim for 7 to 10 servings a day of vegetables and fruits to help you get enough fibre.

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- Add high fibre foods slowly and a little at a time. Adding too much fibre all at once can cause gas and cramping.
- Drink 6 to 8 cups (1.5 to 2 litres) of water each day. Fibre draws water into your stools to keep them soft, bulky and easily passed. Without liquids, fibre does not work properly.
- It is often recommended that people with diverticular disease avoid seeds, nuts, corn, popcorn and tomatoes, but there is no proof that this is needed or helpful.
- If you like red meat, you can include this as part of your healthy diet in portions suggested on Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>), but also try other choices like fish, poultry, tofu, lentils and dried peas and beans. Some evidence suggests that eating large amounts of red meat might increase the risk of diverticular disease, but this has not been proven.
- Exercise regularly. In particular, intense exercise like running or jogging may help to lower the risk of diverticulitis.

Fibre Supplements and Diverticular Disease

There is no proof that taking fibre supplements like bran and methylcellulose helps to manage diverticular disease. However, you can try these if you are not eating enough fibre or if you keep having symptoms while eating a high fibre diet. If you want to use fibre supplements, check with your doctor first.



Additional Resources

Canadian Society of Intestinal Research (CSIR). www.badgut.com. CSIR a registered non-profit organization that is dedicated to increasing public awareness, providing patient education material, and funding medical research regarding a broad range of gastrointestinal diseases and disorders. Call 1-866-600-4875.

These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.

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Notes

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