

Eating Guidelines for Diverticular Disease

What is Diverticular Disease?

Diverticular disease means having diverticulosis or diverticulitis.

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

Diverticulosis means having diverticula. Most people do not have symptoms such as constipation or bleeding.

Diverticulitis is when the pouches or sacs in the colon get inflamed or infected. Symptoms include pain or tenderness, usually in the left lower abdomen, constipation, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and fever. If you have diverticulitis you may need to take medicine and have to stay in the hospital for a few days. Depending on your symptoms, you may continue to eat a regular diet, or you may need a low fibre or liquid diet for a short period. Once your symptoms improve, you can gradually return to a high fibre diet.

If you have symptoms of diverticulitis such as constant pain, fever and diarrhea, report them to your health care provider.



Steps you can take

The following steps may help reduce the risk of getting diverticular disease or a flare up of diverticulitis.

- Enjoy a healthy diet that includes a wide variety of foods.
- Eat higher fibre foods often
 - Fibre may help prevent diverticula (sacs or pouches in the colon) from forming and may make symptoms of diverticular disease less severe. Fibre does not repair diverticula that you already have.
 - Aim to fill half your plate with vegetables and fruits.
 - Include higher fibre whole grains such as whole grain bread,

noodles, brown rice, oats and bran cereals.

- Add higher fibre foods slowly and a little at a time. Adding too much fibre all at once can cause gas and cramping.
- Include nuts, corn, popcorn and foods with seeds such as blueberries, strawberries and tomatoes. Evidence suggests that avoiding these foods is not necessary and does not help reduce symptoms.

Recommended amount of fibre per day

	Age (years)	Amount per day (gram)
Female	19 to 50	25
Female	Over 50	21
Male	19 to 50	38
Male	Over 50	30

- Aim to fill one quarter of your plate with protein foods. Examples of protein foods include lentils, beans, peas, tofu, fish, poultry, lean meat, nuts, seeds and dairy.
 - Choose lentils, beans and peas more often. They are high fibre foods.
 - Limit red meat, such as beef, pork and lamb. Some evidence suggests that eating large amounts of red meat may increase the risk of diverticular disease.
- Drink 6 to 8 cups (1.5 to 2.0 L) of fluid each day. Make water your drink of choice. Fibre draws water into your stools to keep them soft and easy to pass.
- Exercise regularly. Follow the recommendations for your age in the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines.

Diverticular Disease and Fibre Supplements

Talk to your health care provider about fibre supplements if you are not eating enough fibre. Some evidence suggests that fibre supplements may help manage diverticular disease.



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.
- Food Sources of Fibre <https://www.pennutrition.com/KnowledgePathway.aspx?kpid=674&trid=12485&trcatid=467 >

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