



Education

Diverticulosis Diet

What is a diverticulosis diet?

The purpose of this diet is to lessen your chances of developing diverticulosis. If you already have diverticulosis, this diet may prevent symptoms, such as abdominal pain. Always check with your health care provider about the diet that is best for you.

Diverticulosis is the presence of weak areas or tiny pouches in the wall of the intestine. The pouches are usually in the part of the intestine called the colon. The pouches, called diverticula, look like small thumbs or tiny balloons poking out of the side of the colon.

How is a diverticulosis diet different from a regular diet?

A diverticulosis diet is basically a high-fiber diet. A regular diet should also be high in fiber. However, a typical American diet contains far less fiber than is considered healthy.

The goal of a diverticulosis diet is to increase the amount of fiber in your diet. The average American diet includes only about 12 to 15 grams (g) of fiber a day. Doctors recommend a total of 20 to 35 grams of dietary fiber per day.

You should increase the fiber in your diet gradually. Increasing it too quickly can cause abdominal gas and diarrhea.

The increase of fiber should help the passage of digested food through your intestine. It will allow more normal bowel movements and reduce abdominal pain. Drinking plenty of water also helps food pass through the intestine.

In addition to increasing fiber in your diet, you should avoid eating foods that may irritate or get stuck in the diverticula. Examples of such foods are popcorn hulls and kernels, and sunflower, pumpkin, caraway, and sesame seeds. You may also need to avoid nuts if they seem to cause you pain or discomfort. The seeds in tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, strawberries, and raspberries, as well as poppy seeds, are generally considered harmless.

How do I increase the fiber in my diet?

The simplest way to increase the fiber in your diet is to eat more fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, and whole-grain products. This means eating fruits and vegetables every day. Raw fruits and vegetables are best, but cooked, canned, or dried fruits and vegetables are also helpful.

Whole grains are easiest to eat as cereals, such as 100% bran or shredded wheat cereals. Bran, oats, or whole-wheat flour may be baked into breads or muffins. You might sprinkle bran flakes onto other foods, such as salads, yogurt, or cereal.

Here are examples of the amounts of fiber in some foods:

Food	Fiber (grams)
All-Bran cereal (1/3 cup)	5
Shredded Wheat cereal (2 large)	5
Grape-Nuts cereal (1 cup)	5
Peas, 1/2 cup	4
Turnip greens, 1/2 cup	4
Broccoli, 1 cup	4
Apple, 1 large	4

Baked potato with skin	3
Corn flakes, 1 cup	3
Banana, 1 small	2
Carrot, 1 medium	2
Cauliflower, 1 cup raw	2

If for some reason, such as food allergies, you cannot eat enough high-fiber foods, you may get fiber from other sources. For example, you can get psyllium seed products, such as Metamucil, from the grocery or drug store. Two teaspoons of psyllium seed, taken with 8 ounces of water or juice, provide 6 or 7 grams of fiber. Several of these products are now available as wafers, which are tastier and easier to eat. Many people find fiber supplements such as Metamucil or Citrucel to be helpful, but in a few cases they make constipation worse.

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