



Diverticular Disease

Diverticular Diseases are conditions in which small protrusions through the wall of the Colon (Diverticula) form. The pouches form when pressure inside the colon builds, usually because of constipation.

DIVERTICULOSIS

Diverticulosis is a form of diverticular disease which occurs when small pouches, called diverticula, bulge outward through weak spots in the colon (large intestine) or more rarely, through other regions of the large intestine. These diverticula form along the mucous membrane that lines the colon and often protrude through the muscular outer wall of the colon. Many people with diverticulosis do not experience any discomforting symptoms, but occasionally spasms occur leading to intermittent, dull or crampy pain in the left lower stomach (intestinal cramps). This pain is often associated with a change in bowel habits.

Patients sometimes experience bleeding from a ruptured blood vessel in one of the pouches (diverticula). This bleeding is usually self-limiting. However, the bleeding may produce a flow of red blood from the rectum or maroon-coloured stools, sometimes needing brief hospitalisation and occasionally emergency surgery.

DIVERTICULITIS

Diverticulitis occurs when the pouches become infected or inflamed and cause pain and tenderness around the left side of the lower abdomen.

Constipation and diarrhoea can occur as a result of diverticulitis.

WHAT CAUSES DIVERTICULAR DISEASE?

A **low-fibre diet** is considered to be the main cause of diverticular problems. First diagnosed in the United States in the early 1900s, the emergence of diverticular disease coincided with the introduction of low-fibre processed foods (e.g. bran-less refined flour). Most Western diets average 15 - 20 grams of fibre per day - the amount of dietary fibre required to prevent diverticulosis is likely to be 40 grams or more per day. Even now, the disease is rare in Asia and Africa, where people eat high-fibre vegetable diets.

HOW DO I IMPROVE MY DIET?

Try to *improve the amount of fibre in your diet*.

Include the following:

- Whole-grain foods (such as bran cereals) and breads (those made with whole wheat grains)
- Fresh fruits (including the skin and pulp)
- Dried or stewed fruits (such as prunes, raisins, or apricots)
- Root vegetables (such as carrots, turnips, or potatoes).
- Raw or fresh vegetables, such as cabbage (lettuce is actually low in fibre)
- Nuts are a good source of fibre and protein. Although nuts contain fat, it is mostly unsaturated, the "good kind"
- Psyllium Seeds (husks) help to prevent and reduce the discomfort associated with both Diverticulosis and Diverticulitis
- Cascara Sagrada, Chamomile, Ginger and Liquorice root. are herbs that reputedly alleviate diverticulosis
- Cat' s Claw and Peppermint are herbs that reputedly alleviate diverticulitis
- Glucomannans temporarily alleviate diverticulitis

You should also try to follow these dietary suggestions:

- Try to drink at least 1.5 litres (6 – 8 glasses) of fresh water daily
- Eat slowly. Chew your food thoroughly. This allows the saliva and digestive juices of the stomach, liver, and pancreas to break down food more easily. It may also help prevent problems from developing in the lower digestive tract.
- Eat your meals at regular intervals.

OKAY TO EAT SEEDS AND NUTS

The National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse clearly states: "Until recently, many doctors suggested avoiding foods with small seeds such as tomatoes or strawberries because they believed that particles could lodge in the diverticula and cause inflammation. However, this now a controversial point and no evidence supports this recommendation."

Avoidance of nuts, popcorn, and sunflower, pumpkin, caraway, and sesame seeds has been recommended by physicians out of fear that food particles could enter, block, or irritate the diverticula. However, no scientific data support this treatment measure. Eating a high-fibre diet is the only requirement highly emphasized across the literature and eliminating specific foods is not necessary. The seeds in tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, strawberries, and raspberries, as well as poppy seeds, are generally considered harmless.

HOMEOPATHY

Homeopathy, along with attention to diet can help restore balance to the body and alleviate the symptoms of diverticular disease. Moreover treatment by a qualified homeopath will raise the general level of health and so prevent recurrences. Please phone Pauline to discuss this.

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AMOUNT OF FIBRE IN SOME FOODS

FRUITS

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Apple, raw, with skin | 1 medium = 3.3 grams |
| Peach, raw | 1 medium = 1.5 grams |
| Pear, raw | 1 medium = 5.1 grams |
| Tangerine, raw | 1 medium = 1.9 grams |

VEGETABLES

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Asparagus, fresh, cooked | 4 spears = 1.2 grams |
| Broccoli, fresh, cooked | ½ cup = 2.6 grams |
| Brussels sprouts, fresh, cooked | ½ cup = 2 grams |
| Cabbage, fresh, cooked | ½ cup = 1.5 grams |
| Carrot, fresh, cooked | ½ cup = 2.3 grams |
| Cauliflower, fresh, cooked | ½ cup = 1.7 grams |
| Romaine lettuce | 1 cup = 1.2 grams |
| Spinach, fresh, cooked | ½ cup = 2.2 grams |
| Summer squash, cooked | 1 cup = 2.5 grams |
| Tomato, raw | 1 = 1 gram |
| Winter squash, cooked | 1 cup = 5.7 grams |

STARCHY VEGETABLES

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Baked beans, canned, plain | ½ cup = 6.3 grams |
| Kidney beans, fresh, cooked | ½ cup = 5.7 grams |
| Lima beans, fresh, cooked | ½ cup = 6.6 grams |
| Potato, fresh, cooked | 1 = 2.3 grams |

GRAINS

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Bread, whole-wheat | 1 slice = 1.9 grams |
| Brown rice, cooked | 1 cup = 3.5 grams |
| Cereal, bran flake | ¾ cup = 5.3 grams |
| Oatmeal, plain, cooked | ¾ cup = 3 grams |
| White rice, cooked | 1 cup = 0.6 grams |

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