

## **Diverticular Disease & Diet (Diverticulosis and Diverticulitis)**

### **What Causes Diverticular Disease?**

Doctors believe that a low fiber diet is the main cause of diverticular disease. Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. It helps make stools soft and easy to pass. Fiber also prevents constipation. Increased pressure inside the colon due to muscle spasms or straining may cause pouches to form in the walls of the intestines. These pouches, known as diverticula, are about the size of large peas. Diverticulitis occurs when diverticula become infected or inflamed.

### **Treatment of Diverticular Disease.**

#### **1. *Gradually increase the fiber in your diet.***

Increasing the amount of fiber in the diet may reduce symptoms of diverticulosis and prevent complications such as diverticulitis. A high fiber diet causes large, bulky stools that pass through the bowel more easily and quickly. The American Dietetic Association recommends 20 to 35 grams of fiber per day.

#### **Fiber Content in Food (g = grams)**

##### **Fruits**

Apple	1	=	3 g
Blueberries	½ cup	=	3 g
Grapefruit	½	=	0.7g
Pear	1	=	4 g
Strawberries	1 cup	=	4 g

##### **Vegetables**

Broccoli	½ cup	=	2 g
Carrots	1	=	2 g
Celery	1	=	0.6 g
Corn	½ cup	=	3 g
Green beans	½ cup	=	1 g
Peas	½ cup	=	2 g
Spinach	½ cup	=	2 g
Sweet potatoes	1	=	3 g

##### **Beans and Grains**

Black-eyed peas	½ cup	=	4 g
Lima beans	½ cup	=	4 g
Kidney beans	½ cup	=	3 g
Brown rice	1 cup	=	3 g
Bran flakes	¾ cup	=	5 g
Whole-wheat bread	1 slice	=	2 g
White rice	1 cup	=	1 g

source: JA Tpennington, *Sixteenth Edition of Bowes and Church's Food Values of Portions Commonly Used*. J.B. Lippincott Publishing Co., Philadelphia, PA. 1994

The recommendation to avoid nuts and seeds appears to have originated from a single study. No scientific evidence supports the association between nuts and seeds and inflammation of diverticula. Popcorn may cause inflammation. The dietary recommendations from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for diverticular disease is a diet high in fiber, not necessarily excluding nuts and seeds.

**2. Increase water intake to 64 ounces per day.**

It is essential to increase the water you drink when you increase the amount of fiber in your diet. This assists in the prevention of constipation.

**3. Engage in regular activity.**

The American Heart Association recommends thirty minutes of activity daily for overall health. This activity also helps prevent constipation. Walking is a great form of activity and you can split it up throughout the day (i.e. 15 minutes before work, and 15 minutes after lunch).

**4. Report any gastrointestinal symptoms to your doctor.**

While the diverticula themselves do not cause symptoms, complications occasionally occur. Unexplained abdominal pain or rectal bleeding should be discussed with your physician.

**Two Sample High Fiber Days:**

<u>Menu</u>	<u>Fiber</u>	<u>Menu</u>	<u>Fiber</u>
1½ cups Bran Flakes Cereal	10 g	1 English Muffin	1 g
1 cup fat-free milk	0	1 Tbsp peanut butter	1 g
1 cup strawberries	4 g	½ banana (slices)	1 g
1 slice whole wheat toast	2 g	1 cup fat-free milk	0 g
Jelly or margarine	0		
Turkey breast on	0	Garden salad with beans	
2 slices rye bread	2 g	2 cups lettuce	2 g
Lettuce and tomatoes	1 g	½ cup diced tomatoes	1 g
Mustard or mayonnaise	0	½ cup diced green pepper	1 g
1 medium raw carrot	3 g	1 medium raw carrot	3 g
Fresh apple	3 g	⅔ cup kidney beans	5 g
		Lite salad dressing	0 g
		7 reduced fat Triscuits	4 g
		1 fresh orange	2 g
Flank steak	0 g	Grilled salmon	0 g
Baked potato with skin	5 g	9 spears asparagus	3 g
Margarine or sour cream	0 g	1 cup brown rice	4 g
1 cup broccoli	5 g	1 fudgesicle	0 g
Frozen yogurt	0 g	1 raw peach	2 g
<b>total: 35 g</b>		<b>total: 30 g</b>	