

## **Diverticular Disease**

**What is Diverticular Disease?** - The colon, or large intestine, is a 5-foot-long cylinder. It absorbs water and some nutrients from what we eat and drink, and it moves waste out of the body. When healthy, the colon has a smooth inner wall. Diverticula are small pouches that form and bulge outward from the normally smooth muscular layer of the colon. Age is a major risk factor for developing these small pouches. Genetics may also play a role. Diet is also considered to be another principal factor.

**Diverticulosis** – Diverticu“**losis**” means that the small pouches have formed in the colon wall, yet many people may never develop serious issues other than some mild cramps, bloating, and constipation. Diverticu“**losis**” is managed by eating a diet high in fiber. A high fiber diet can prevent inflammation and infection in these small pouches.

**Diverticulitis** – Diverticu“**litis**” on the other hand, is when the small pouches become inflamed or infected. This is more serious and requires medical attention. Diverticu“**litis**” treatment focuses on treating the inflammation and infection and resting the colon to prevent further complications. A clear liquid diet or a low-fiber diet helps to temporarily rest the colon.

**Progressing from a Low to High-Fiber Diet** - After a bout of Diverticu“**litis**,” and once healing occurs, follow your doctor’s instructions to gradually increase fiber intake in your diet. Because diverticulitis tends to recur, prevention is always a part of the plan. For many, that means moving towards a high-fiber diet when not in an inflamed state.

**Meals on Wheels** – A hot, nutritious meal is the basis of the Meals on Wheels Program. Each of our meals meet at least 1/3 of the Daily Recommended Dietary Allowance for the population we serve. Along with a variety of other nutrients, our meals provide a good source of Dietary Fiber. Plant-based foods (vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans) provide dietary fiber.

**Dietary Fiber Tips** - Dietary fiber not only reduces the risk of diverticulitis, but it also fights constipation, combats obesity, improves blood sugar, reduces the risk of diabetes, lowers cholesterol, and reduces the risk of heart attacks!

- Drink plenty of fluid when increasing your fiber intake – fluid helps your body process fiber.
- Increase your fiber intake gradually ~ 5 grams per week – Strive for an overall goal of 21-38 grams per day.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables – Have 2 servings of fresh fruits and 1 serving of vegetables each day and slowly advance. Strive for 5+ servings of fruits & vegetables each day.
- Mix whole grain pasta with regular pasta to increase the fiber.
- Sprinkle wheat germ on yogurt, cereal, or fruit.
- Eat several small servings of unsalted nuts weekly. You do not need to avoid seeds, nuts, corn, and popcorn, like previously thought.
- Eat beans or lentils at least 2 x’s a week and gradually increase your intake.
- Consider adding a serving of a psyllium-based fiber product to your daily intake.

Sources: Eating for Diverticulosis; Environmental Nutrition; June 2016. [www.environmentalnutrition.com](http://www.environmentalnutrition.com) and Gastroenterology Associates of Beverly Hills; <https://www.gastrobh.com/contents/patient-info/dietary-education/diverticulitis>

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