

# Care Gram

## Diverticulosis and Diverticulitis

### The Disease

Many people have small pouches that stick out through weak spots in their colon. It is like an inner tube that pokes through weak places in a tire.

### Terms

- Each pouch in the colon is called a diverticulum.
- When a person has many pouches, the health problem is known as diverticulosis.
- When the pouches become infected or swells, the health problem is called diverticulitis.
- Diverticulosis and diverticulitis also are called diverticular disease.

### Symptoms/Signs\*\*

#### Diverticulosis

Most people with diverticulosis have no symptoms. Other people may have:

- Mild cramps
- Bloating
- Constipation (hard bowel movements) or diarrhea

#### Diverticulitis

- Stomach pain
- Soreness around the left side of the lower abdomen
- Fever
- Nausea or vomiting
- Chills
- Cramping
- Changes in bowel habits – constipation or diarrhea
- Diverticular bleeding

\*\* Having these symptoms does not always mean that you have diverticulosis or diverticulitis. Visit your doctor if you have these symptoms.



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**Causes**

The cause of diverticulosis is not certain. As we age, the chances of diverticulosis increase. Studies suggest that certain factors increase your risk for diverticulosis. These include:

- A history of constipation
- Low fiber intake
- A high intake of red meats
- Obesity
- Decrease in physical activity

Fiber can help to prevent constipation by making stools softer and easier to pass.

**Treating Diverticulitis/Diverticulosis with Nutrition**

If your doctor has diagnosed you with diverticulitis, a low fiber diet may be recommended until symptoms resolve. Your doctor may recommend a liquid diet to help the colon rest. Fiber should be added slowly back into diet, as directed by your doctor. If your doctor has diagnosed you with diverticulosis, a high fiber diet may be recommended.

**Sources of Fiber**

Fiber only is found in plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes and whole grains.

**Tips when adding fiber to the diet with diverticulosis:**

- Adding fiber to the diet should be done slowly – adding fiber to your diet too quickly may cause gas, cramping, bloating or diarrhea.
- Drink at least 8 cups of fluids every day to help keep stools soft.
- It is believed that you do not need to avoid certain foods if you have diverticulosis.
- In the past, a doctor may have recommended that you avoid nuts, seeds and popcorn. However, research suggests that these foods are not harmful for people with diverticulosis.
- The types of foods that worsen symptoms are personal to you. A food diary can help identify foods that are causing problems.
- The doctor also may suggest taking a fiber product, such as Citrucel® or Metamucil®, once a day.

	Diverticulosis	Diverticulitis
Food Group		
Grains 6oz per day	Best choices include whole or cracked wheat breads, muffins, bagels, or pita bread. Rye Bread, Whole wheat crackers or crisp bread; whole grain or bran cereals, oatmeal or oat bran, whole wheat pasta, brown or wild rice. Ex: 1 Cup Oatmeal, 1 whole wheat English muffin	Enriched white breads, plain rolls, muffins, crackers, white rice, white pasta, refined cereals. Slowly add foods from the diverticulosis list, as directed by your doctor.
Dairy (Milk, Yogurt, cheese) 3 cups per day	A 1 cup serving equals 1 cup milk or yogurt; 1 ½ ounces natural cheese; 2 ounces of processed cheese	Milk products as tolerated.
Fruit 1 ½ cups per day	For more fiber, eat raw fruits including the peel. Choose fresh or frozen fruit before fruit juice as such contains more fiber. Ex: ½ cup raspberries, 1 pear with skin, 1 apple with skin	Pulpless fruit juice, most canned fruit, applesauce, ripe bananas and melons, oranges. Avoid berries and pineapple. Slowly add fruit from the diverticulosis column when symptoms resolve, as directed by your doctor.
Vegetables 2 ½ cups per day	For more fiber, eat raw vegetables as they contain more fiber than cooked or canned. Ex: 1 cup Cauliflower, ½ cup peas	Remove skin from vegetables prior to cooking. Avoid raw vegetables until symptoms resolve. High gas producing vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts also may need to be avoided until symptoms resolve. Add slowly back into diet, as directed by your doctor.
Protein (Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dried beans and peas) 6oz per day	Best high fiber choices of beans are ½ cup garbanzo, kidney, lima, or pinto. 1 ounce of cooked meat, fish, or poultry is one serving. 1 Tbsp peanut butter also is a serving.	Best choices: smooth peanut butter, ground or tender cuts of meat, poultry, and fish. Egg – not fried. Avoid beans and legumes such as beans and fried meats/eggs.
Added fats and sugar	Use sparingly	Use sparingly

Reference: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases at <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/diverticulosis-diverticulitis>