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.
- Diverticulosis occurs when the pouches are present.
- Diverticulitis occurs when the pouches become infected or swell.
- Diverticulosis and diverticulitis are also 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
- Rectal bleeding

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

Licking Memorial Health Systems

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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
- Over the age of 40

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

Treating Diverticulitis/Diverticulosis with Nutrition
If you are diagnosed with diverticulitis, your doctor may recommend a low-fiber diet until your symptoms resolve. Your doctor also may recommend a liquid diet to help the colon rest. Once your diverticulitis has resolved, you should not stay on a low-fiber diet. 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 is only 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.

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Food Group	Diverticulosis (High-fiber choices)	Diverticulitis (Low-fiber choices)
Grains	• Whole or cracked wheat breads • Bagels • 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 Example: 1 Cup oatmeal or 1 whole wheat English muffin	• Enriched white breads • Plain rolls • Saltine crackers • White rice • White pasta • Refined cereals Slowly add foods from the diverticulosis list, as directed by your doctor.
Dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese)	A 1 cup serving equals: • 1 cup milk or yogurt • 1 1/2 ounces natural cheese • 2 ounces of processed cheese	Milk products as tolerated.
Fruit	• For more fiber, eat raw fruits including the skin. • Choose fresh or frozen fruit over fruit juice. Fresh or frozen fruit contains more fiber. Example: 1/2 cup raspberries, 1 pear with skin, or 1 apple with skin	• Choose: – Pulp-less fruit juice (avoid prune juice) – Most canned fruit – Applesauce – Ripe bananas and melons • Avoid berries and pineapple • Slowly add fruit from the diverticulosis column when symptoms resolve, and as directed by your doctor
Vegetables	For more fiber, eat raw vegetables which contain more fiber than cooked or canned. Example: 1 cup cauliflower or 1/2 cup peas	• Remove skin from vegetables prior to cooking. • Avoid raw vegetables until symptoms resolve. • Avoid high gas producing vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts until symptoms resolve. Add these slowly back into diet, as directed by your doctor.

Your doctor may recommend a low- or high-fiber diet depending on your condition. Listed below are high-fiber food options for diverticulosis and low-fiber food options for diverticulitis.

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Food Group	Diverticulosis	Diverticulitis
Protein (Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dried beans, and peas) 6 ounces per day	• Best high fiber choices of beans include: 1/2 cup garbanzo, kidney, Lima, or pinto. • 1 ounce of cooked meat, fish, or poultry is one serving. • 1 Tbsp. peanut butter is a serving.	Best choices include: • 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

Daily food group recommendations can vary according to age, sex, and activity level. Please refer to realfood.gov for personalized recommendations.

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

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