

Eating guidelines for diverticulosis, diverticular disease and diverticulitis

Diverticulosis and diverticular disease

Most people with diverticulosis and diverticular disease are advised to follow a high-fibre diet. This can help to keep your poo soft and easy to pass, and reduce the pressure in your large bowel. It can also help to ease symptoms you may already have, such as bloating, constipation, diarrhoea (the runs), and pain.

High-fibre foods include vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, legumes (cooked dried beans, peas and lentils), wholegrain breads and cereals.

If your diet is low in fibre it is important you gradually add more fibre over the course of a few weeks. This will help to prevent side effects, such as bloating and wind (flatulence), that sometimes happen with a high-fibre diet.

The HealthInfo page “Fibre and fluid for healthy bowels” explains more about eating a high-fibre diet.



Are there foods I should avoid to prevent diverticulitis attacks?

In the past, people with diverticula were told to avoid nuts, seeds, popcorn and foods with small seeds, such as tomatoes, cucumbers and strawberries. We thought these foods could get stuck in diverticula and cause diverticulitis (inflammation). But there's no proof that these foods cause diverticulitis. In fact, eating a high-fibre diet – which may include nuts and seeds – might make it less likely you get diverticulitis.

Do I need to take a fibre supplement?

If you don't get better with a high-fibre diet, your doctor may suggest you take a fibre supplement (also called bulk-forming laxatives or bulking agents) such as Konsyl-D or Metamucil. You can get fibre supplements on prescription or buy them at the pharmacy. It is important to read and follow the manufacturers' directions for taking them, or follow what your doctor or pharmacist says if they tell you how to take them. It may take several days for the fibre supplement to make your symptoms better.



What about fluids?

High-fibre foods and fibre supplements soak up fluid, so it is important you drink at least eight cups of fluid each day. Make sure you have some water, but milk, cordial, fruit juice, hot drinks, soup, jelly, custard and ice blocks all count as fluids.

Go easy on fruit juice, cordial and fizzy drinks if you are watching your weight, as they are all high in sugar.

The HealthInfo page “Are you drinking enough?” explains more about making sure you get enough fluid.

Eating guidelines for diverticulitis

If you have a flare-up of diverticulitis you may be told to follow a low-fibre diet to help your digestive tract rest and heal. If your symptoms are severe you may need to take medicine and stay in the hospital for a while.

You might need a clear liquid diet for a short period to give your bowel a rest. Suitable fluids include apple juice, Lucozade, lemonade, clear soups (for example, chicken stock in hot water), black tea and coffee. Once your symptoms improve, you can slowly start to eat a low-fibre diet and in time return to a normal high-fibre diet.

Compiled by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Endorsed by Healthy Eating Healthy Ageing Project dietitian, Canterbury DHB. February 2015.