

Diverticulosis Diet

What is a diverticulosis?

Weak areas or tiny pouches in the wall of the bowel (intestine) are called diverticula. The pouches are usually in the part of the bowel called the colon. The pouches look like small thumbs or tiny balloons poking out of the side of the colon. If you have these pouches, you have diverticulosis. The following diet information can help prevent diverticula from developing. It can also be used to try to prevent problems from diverticula (such as infection, called diverticulitis).

How is a diverticulosis diet different from a regular diet?

A diet to prevent diverticulosis is basically a high-fiber diet. The average American diet includes only about 12 to 15 grams (g) of fiber a day. Doctors recommend 20 to 35 grams of dietary fiber a day for a healthy bowel.

You should increase the fiber in your diet slowly. Increasing it too quickly can cause gas and diarrhea.

Eating more fiber can help food pass through your intestine. You will have more normal bowel movements and less stomach pain. Drinking plenty of water also helps food pass through the intestine.

There is no evidence that any foods cause diverticulosis. However, if you have diverticulosis, you may want to avoid eating foods that may irritate or get stuck in diverticula, such as:

- Popcorn
- Sunflower, pumpkin, caraway, and sesame seeds
- Nuts

If these foods do not seem to cause stomach pain, you may eat them.

The seeds in tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, strawberries, and raspberries, as well as poppy seeds, should not cause any problems.

If you do not have diverticulosis but simply want a healthier, high-fiber diet, there should be no problem with eating any of these seeds.

How can I increase the fiber in my diet?

Some of the best sources of dietary fiber are beans and peas, such as navy beans, split peas, lentils, pinto beans, and black beans. Other sources of fiber include other vegetables, fruits, flax seeds, nuts, and whole grains. Whole-grain sources of fiber include whole wheat, bran, whole rye, oats and oatmeal, whole-grain corn, and brown or wild rice. Whole grains are easiest to eat as cereals, such as 100% bran or shredded wheat cereals. Bran, oats, or whole-wheat flour may be baked into breads or muffins. You might sprinkle bran flakes onto other foods, such as salads, yogurt, or cereal.

Here are examples of the amounts of fiber in some foods:

Food and serving size	Fiber (grams)
Beans, 1/2 cup cooked (such as pinto or kidney beans)	6 to 9
Soybeans, 1/2 cup cooked	4 to 5
Bran ready-to-eat cereal, 1/3 cup	3 to 9
Pear	5
Green peas, 1/2 cup cooked	4
Whole wheat English muffin	4
Prunes, 1/2 cup stewed	4
Apple, with skin, large	4
Greens (such as spinach, collard greens), 1/2 cup cooked	3
Almonds, 1 ounce	3
Whole wheat spaghetti, 1/2 cup cooked	3
Banana, 1 medium	3
Orange, 1 medium	3
Baked potato with skin, small	3
Oat bran muffin, small	3
Winter squash, 1/2 cup cooked	3
Broccoli, 1/2 cup cooked	3

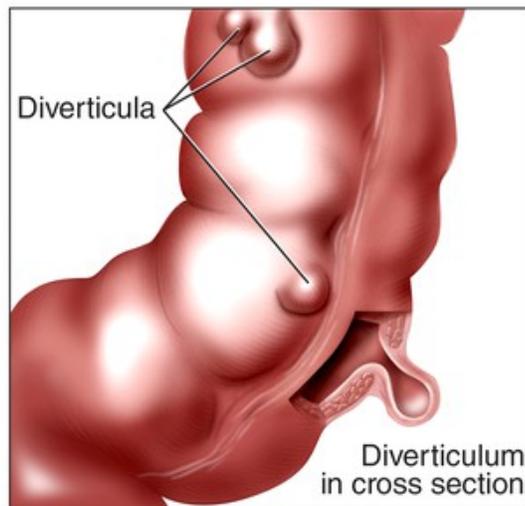
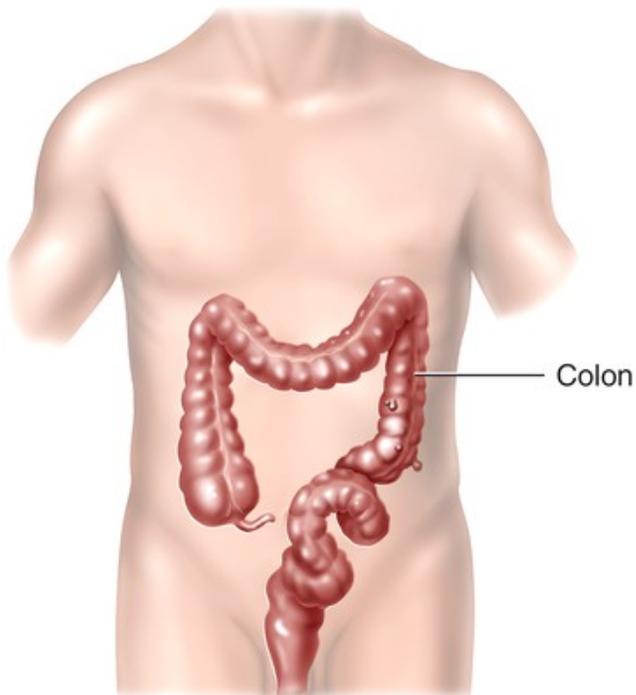
If for some reason, such as food allergies, you cannot eat enough high-fiber foods, you may get fiber from other sources. For example, you can get psyllium seed products, such as Metamucil, from the grocery or drugstore. Two teaspoons of psyllium seed, taken with 8 ounces of water or juice, provide 6 or 7 grams of fiber. Many of these products are now available as wafers, which are tastier and easier to eat. Many people find fiber supplements such as Metamucil or Citrucel to be helpful, but in a few cases they make constipation worse.

Be sure to ask your healthcare provider what diet is best for you.

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