

Diverticulosis Diet

What is a diverticulosis diet?

- The purpose of this diet is to lesson your chances of developing diverticulitis, a complication of diverticulosis.
- Diverticulosis is the condition of having weak area or outpourings in the wall of the colon. The colon is part of the large intestine. The pouches, called diverticula, look somewhat like small thumbs poking out of the side of the intestine.

How is a diverticulosis diet different from a regular diet?

- A diverticulosis diet is basically a high fiber diet. A regular diet should also be high in fiber. A typical American diet contains far less fiber than is considered healthy.
- The goal of a diverticulosis diet is to increase the amount of fiber in your diet. The average American diet includes only about 12 to 15 grams of fiber per day. Doctors recommend a total of 25 to 35 grams of dietary fiber per day.
- You should increase the fiber in your diet gradually. Increasing too quickly can cause abdominal gas and diarrhea.
- The increase of fiber should help the passage of digested food through your intestine. It will allow more normal bowel movements and reduce abdominal pain.

How do increase fiber in my diet?

- The simples way to increase fiber in your diet is to eat more fresh fruits, fresh vegetables and whole grain products.
- 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.

Dietary Guidelines

- Many people have the misconception that they must avoid tiny seeds, grains, lettuce and other high fiber foods for fear that particles could lodge in the diverticula and cause inflammation. This has never been proven and in fact microscopic review of surgical specimens show this not to be the case. There is no reason to avoid such foods for fear they will precipitate disaster.
- Foods such as nuts, popcorn hulls and sunflower, pumpkin, caraway and sesame seeds should be avoided.
- People differ in the amounts and types of foods they can eat. Decisions about diet should be made based on what works best for each person.
- Scan food labels for bread and cereal products listing whole grain or whole wheat as the first ingredient.
- Look for cooked and ready to eat cereals with at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.
- Eat raw fruits and vegetables; they have more fiber than cooked or canned foods, or juice. Dried fruits (especially dried figs) are also good sources of fiber.

- Increase fiber in meat dishes by adding pinto beans, black-eyed peas, bran, or oatmeal.
- Try adding 2-3 tsp of unprocessed wheat bran to foods such as meatloaf, casseroles, homemade breads, muffins and other baked goods.
- Dairy foods provide little fiber. Increase fiber by adding fresh fruit, whole grain or bran cereals, nuts or seeds to yogurt or cottage cheese.
- Chopping, peeling, cooking, pureeing, and processing food may reduce fiber content.
- Substitute oat bran for one third of all purpose flour in baked good recipes.
- Best to eat a variety of foods and not to rely on a fiber supplement.
- Do it gradually, rapid fiber increases may result in gas, cramping, bloating, or diarrhea.
- Drink plenty of fluids. A high fiber diet requires a lot of liquids. Fiber acts as a sponge in the large intestine, if you do not drink enough, you could become constipated. Try for at least 6-8 cups daily.

High Fiber Diet

Breads & Grains 6-11 servings each day

- Whole grain breads, muffins, bagels or pita bread
- Rye bread
- Whole wheat crackers or crisp breads
- Whole grain or bran cereals
- Oatmeal, oat bran, or grits
- Barley, dry
- Wheat germ
- Whole wheat pasta
- Brown rice

Vegetables 3-5 servings each day

- All vegetables such as asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, green beans, green pepper, onions, peas, potatoes with skin, snow peas, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and zucchini.

Fruits 2-4 servings each day

- All fruits such as apple, banana, berries, grapefruit, nectarine, orange, peach and pear.

Milk & Dairy 2-3 servings each day

- All dairy products

Meat & Meat Substitutes 2-3 servings each day

- All beans and peas such as garbanzo beans, kidney beans, lentils, lima beans, split peas, and pinto beans.
- All nuts and seeds such as almonds, peanuts, Brazil nuts, cashews, peanut butter, walnuts sesame and sunflower seeds.
- All meat, poultry, fish, and eggs.

If you are following a low fat diet, use nuts and seeds in moderation.

Fats & Snacks

- Whole-wheat pretzels, baked tortilla corn chips, and trail mix made with dried fruits.
- Cakes, breads, and cookies made with oatmeal or fruit.