

Diverticulitis and Diverticulosis



Until our industrialized society started refining all the sugar and wheat in the early 1900's, diverticular disease was rare. The colon had lots of fiber and people were NEVER constipated. Now constipation is so common that it is a popular conversation piece. By straining to move your bowels the pressure on the colon pushes out weak areas in a normally smooth colon and we get the little marble sized "diverticulae." These literally are full of stool all the time. At any time they may get infected like appendicitis and burst.

So even though 10% of people over 40 years old have the picture on the left (typically without any symptoms), this disease can become so bad that part of your colon may need to be removed (complete with pouch on the belly for 6 weeks). It is common to have to use antibiotics to "quiet down" an infection caused by diverticulitis.

The most common symptom of diverticulitis is abdominal pain.

The most common sign is tenderness around the left side of the lower abdomen. Infection may cause, fever, nausea, vomiting, chills, cramping, and as well.

Increasing the amount of fiber in the diet may reduce symptoms of diverticulosis and prevent complications such as diverticulitis. Fiber keeps stool soft and lowers pressure inside the colon so that bowel contents can move through easily. The American Dietetic Association recommends 20 to 35 grams of fiber each day. The table below shows the amount of fiber in some foods that you can easily add to your diet.

Fruits

apple, raw, with skin 1 medium = 4 grams
peach, raw 1 medium = 2 grams
pear, raw 1 medium = 4 grams
tangerine, raw 1 medium = 2 grams

Vegetables

Asparagus, fresh, cooked 4 spears = 1 gram
Broccoli, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup = 2.5 grams
Brussels sprouts, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup = 2 grams
Cabbage, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup = 1.5 grams
Carrot, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup = 2.5 grams
Cauliflower, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup = 1.5 grams
Romaine lettuce 1 cup = 1 gram
Spinach, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup = 2 grams
Summer squash, cooked 1 cup = 3 grams
Tomato, raw 1 = 1 gram

Starchy Vegetables

Baked beans, canned, plain 1/2 cup = 6.5 grams
Kidney beans, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup = 8 grams
Lima beans, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup = 6.5 grams
Potato, fresh, cooked 1 = 3 grams

Grains

Bread, whole-wheat 1 slice = 2 grams
Brown rice, cooked 1 cup = 2.5 grams
Cereal, bran flake 3/4 cup = 5 grams
Oatmeal, plain, cooked 3/4 cup = 3 grams
White rice, cooked 1 cup = 1 gram

We may also recommend taking a fiber product such as Citrucel or Metamucil once a day. These products are mixed with water and provide about 2 to 3.5 grams of fiber per tablespoon, mixed with 8 ounces of water.

Until recently, many doctors suggested avoiding foods with small seeds such as tomatoes or strawberries because they believed that particles could lodge in the diverticula and cause inflammation. However, it is now generally accepted that only foods that may irritate or get caught in the diverticula cause problems. Foods such as nuts, popcorn hulls, and sunflower, pumpkin, caraway, and sesame seeds should be avoided. The seeds in tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, strawberries, and raspberries, as well as poppy seeds, are generally considered harmless. Bon appetite!!!!

Elk fillets are less fiber than meadow grasses

