

*Better  
Together*

## Patient information

### **Diet and Diverticular Disease**

Therapies Directorate

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

This leaflet contains advice for the long term dietary management of diverticular disease and what to do during an episode of irritation or infection (diverticulitis).

## **What is Diverticular Disease?**

- Diverticular Disease is the name given to the presence of small pouches that occur in the wall of the large bowel (colon).
- Approximately half the population in the UK aged over 50 will have multiple pouches in the bowel.
- Most people do not experience symptoms however one in four people will experience symptoms such as abdominal pain, bloating, constipation or diarrhoea.
- The presence of the disease without symptoms is called 'diverticulosis.'

## **What causes Diverticular Disease?**

Diverticular Disease is thought to be caused by extra pressure in the bowel; pouches form at weak points and can become permanent.

The increased pressure may be due to lack of fibre. It is believed Diverticular Disease is more common in Western countries because diets are typically low in fibre.

The disease does not go away but you can reduce your risk of developing severe symptoms with the help of a □ high fibre diet and plenty of fluids.

## **Increasing the fibre in your diet without sufficient fluid may lead to constipation.**

- Aim for eight to ten cups/glasses of fluid each day  
(One and a half to two litres/day)

## **Healthy Eating**

The advice for this condition can be part of a healthy balanced diet. The eatwell plate makes healthy eating easier to understand, by showing the types and proportions of foods we need to have a healthy and well balanced diet.

## **Eight tips for eating well**

1. Base your meals on starchy foods.
2. Eat fruit and vegetables.
3. Eat more fish.
4. Cut down on saturated fat and sugar.
5. Try to eat less salt - no more than six grams a day.
6. Get active and try to be a healthy weight.
7. Drink plenty of water.
8. Don't skip breakfast.

Reference <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/eatwell-plate.aspx>

**Bread, rice, potatoes and pasta**  
and any other starchy foods

**Fruit and vegetables**



**Milk and dairy foods**

**Food and drinks**  
high in fat and/or sugar

**Meat, fish, eggs, beans**  
and other non-dairy sources of protein

## **When you are symptom free or experiencing mild symptoms**

Diverticular Disease usually responds well to a diet high in fibre. Some fibre is not digested on its journey through the gut and is essential to help keep the lining of the colon healthy.

It is important to increase your intake of fibre slowly over a period of two to three weeks. Start by making one of the suggested changes below for a few days before introducing another. Foods can affect people differently and it's important to make change in a stepwise manner.

**The following list may give you some ideas on how to easily incorporate fibre into your daily meal pattern.**

- **Choose high fibre or wholemeal/wholegrain breads and cereals**

If you do not like wholemeal varieties of bread, try higher fibre white breads e.g. Wholewhite, Best of Both, 50:50.

- **Try wholegrain or fibre enriched cereals.**  
e.g. Supermarket own brand high fibre cereals, Branflakes, Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, porridge, or Puffed Wheat.
- **In baking, try using half wholemeal and half white flour.**  
You may need to add more fluid to the recipe.
- **If you eat rice or pasta try the brown varieties.**  
They take longer to cook but can fill you up for longer.  
If you haven't tried these before maybe try half white mixed with half wholemeal varieties to start off with.
- **Choose biscuits or crackers which contain wholemeal flour or oats.**  
e.g. Digestive or oat biscuits, wholewheat crackers or crispbreads.

- **Add pulses and extra vegetable to meals, soups, stews, sauces.**  
e.g. Lentils, beans (baked beans, kidney beans, butter beans), peas, vegetables (fresh, tinned or frozen).
- **Fruit as a snack or desert**  
Add to yoghurts or breakfast cereals. Try fresh, tinned, frozen and dried varieties.

In the past it was believed that foods such as nuts, sweetcorn, strawberry/raspberry pips and tomato pips could increase the risk of irritation/infection (diverticulitis).

However the exact cause of these symptoms and complications are unknown. Therefore there is no clear guidance regarding these foods.

You will only need to avoid them if they cause you symptoms.

### **When you are experiencing severe symptoms**

If one or more pouches become inflamed due to irritation or infection, this is called 'diverticulitis.'

Diverticulitis causes more severe symptoms than usual, such as severe abdominal pain, fever and sickness. If you experience any of these, seek advice from your family doctor (GP).

These symptoms of diverticulitis are sometimes treated with antibiotics and changing temporarily to a low fibre diet may also help to reduce them further. Therefore follow the tips below.

### **Low Fibre Diet**

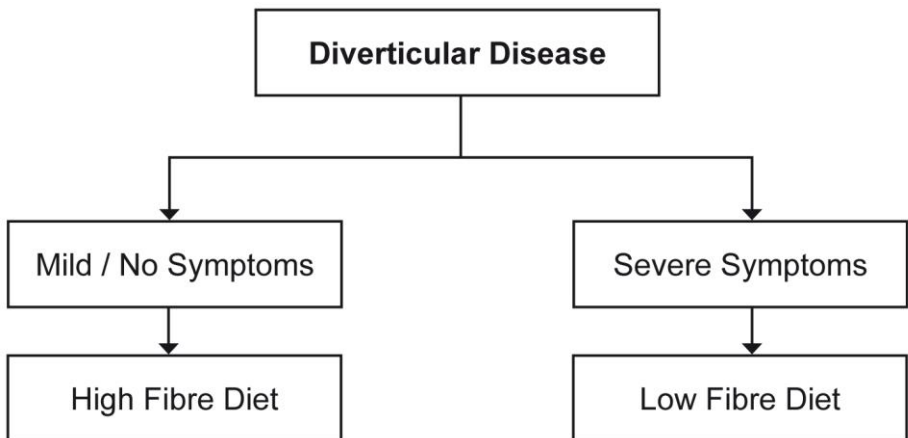
- Avoid whole grain varieties of bread, rice, pasta and cereals. Have "white" varieties.

- Avoid fruit and vegetables. Including beans and pulses.
- Ensure you drink eight to ten glasses of fluid per day (One and a half to two litres/day).

Once your severe symptoms have improved gradually reintroduce fibre as explained in the section “When you are symptom free or experiencing mild symptoms.”

If symptoms continue speak with your family doctor (GP).

## Summary



## Further Information

### Dietitians

**The Royal Liverpool University Hospital:**

**Tel: 0151 706 2120**

**Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2120**

### Broadgreen Hospital

**Tel: 0151 282 6473**

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