

DIVERTICULAR DISEASE: WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

WHAT IS DIVERTICULAR DISEASE?

Diverticular disease affects your digestive system.

- Some people have no symptoms—this is called **diverticulosis** which means you have small pouches (called **diverticula**) in your bowels. These pouches are usually found when you have a colonoscopy (a close-up look at your bowel) for another reason.
- Other people have stomach pain (sometimes quite bad), as well as diarrhea, constipation, fever, or throwing up. These symptoms are caused by the diverticula getting inflamed or infected. This is called **diverticulitis**.



HOW IS IT TREATED?

If you have diverticulitis, you may need to take medicine and even stay in the hospital for a few days. And you will need to follow a low-fibre or liquid diet for a few days to give your bowels a rest. There are also some steps you can take to reduce your chances of getting diverticulitis again.

Have Plenty of Fibre

Eating lots of vegetables and fruits, whole grains, legumes (lentils, peas, beans), nuts, and seeds is a great way to get more fibre into your diet. Find out from Dietitians of Canada how much fibre you need every day: <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Fibre/Focus-on-Fibre.aspx>.

Make sure you slowly increase how much fibre you eat to avoid gas and bloating. If you're having trouble getting enough fibre into your diet or you continue to have symptoms, talk to your health care provider about taking a fibre supplement.

Drink Lots of Water



Drink 1.5 to 2 litres (6 to 8 cups) of water every day. This is especially important while you're increasing the fibre in your diet. Fibre from the food you eat soaks up water—this helps your stools (“poo”) move more easily through your body.

Be Physically Active

Being active is good for your body and your mind! Some studies show that if you do intense exercise (like running), you may lower your chances of getting diverticulitis again.

ARE THERE ANY FOODS I SHOULD AVOID?

For a long time, it was thought that foods like nuts, seeds, or corn could make diverticulitis worse. We now know this isn't true and, in fact, these foods may help prevent it because they're high in fibre.

Always speak to your health care provider if you have any questions about diverticular disease or concerns about symptoms you may have.

Sources: 1) *What you need to know about diverticular disease*. Dietitians of Canada. 2019. www.Unlockfood.ca; **2)** *Healthy eating guidelines for people with diverticular disease*. Healthlink BC. 2019.

