

Eating well with diverticular disease

Nutrition and Dietetics

Information for Patients

Produced: September 2024

Review: September 2027

Leaflet number: 1526 Version: 1

What is diverticular disease?

Diverticular disease occurs when small pouches or sacs (diverticula) form in the wall of the large bowel (colon). There are 2 types:

1. **Diverticulosis:** diverticula are present but not causing symptoms
2. **Diverticulitis:** diverticula are inflamed or infected. Symptoms can include:
 - pain especially in the left side of the abdomen,
 - bloating,
 - changes in your pooing habit (constipation or diarrhoea),
 - feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting),
 - fevers or chills
 - bleeding.

What are the causes of diverticular disease?

- Genetics
- Problems with the structure and/or movement of the bowel
- Ageing
- Diets low in fibre

Fibre provides bulk and absorbs water to keep the poo (stool) soft. This lets it move smoothly through the bowel and is easier to pass. Low fibre diets can lead to constipation. When constipation occurs poo is more solid, smaller and harder to pass. Straining to pass poo increases the pressure inside the large bowel. This leads to diverticula forming.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

What should I eat when I am feeling well (diverticulosis)?

- Try to have a high fibre diet to keep the poo soft and bulky. This may reduce the chance of more diverticula. It may reduce the risk of hard pellets of poo lodging in the pouches.
- If your poo is hard, slowly increase the amount of fibre you eat over a few weeks. This will help to stop side effects such as bloating and wind.
- You should aim to eat 30g of fibre a day. Your dietitian can give you more information on the fibre content of common foods.
- Eat high fibre foods:
 - Choose higher fibre starchy foods – see table on page 3
 - Have at least 5 portions of fruit or vegetables each day
 - Add lentils, pulses and beans to soups, casseroles, curries, stews
- Drink 8 to 10 cups/glasses of fluid daily (1.5 - 2 litres) such as water, tea, coffee, fruit juice, milk. Drink more fluid if you are eating more fibre.
- Experts do not think nuts, popcorn, seeds and fruit skins cause diverticular disease. Only avoid these if they are causing problems.

For more information on healthy eating ask your dietitian or visit <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-to-eat-a-balanced-diet/eating-a-balanced-diet/>

How can I reduce the risk of going on to develop diverticulitis?

- Being more active can reduce your risk of developing diverticulitis. You should do moderate physical activity for 150 minutes each week. If you think you could do more exercise, ask your dietitian for a leaflet on physical activity
- If you smoke, stopping smoking can reduce your risk of developing diverticulitis. Visit <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/10-self-help-tips-to-stop-smoking> or call the NHS Smokefree helpline on 0300 123 1044
- If you are overweight or obese, losing weight can reduce your risk of developing more serious disease. Ask your dietitian or doctor about services that can support you.

What should I eat when I am feeling unwell (diverticulitis)?

Follow advice from your doctor. For severe diverticulitis this may be:

- a fluid only diet for 2 to 3 days until symptoms settle
- slowly reintroduce low fibre solid foods once you are feeling better (see table page 3)
- return to eating higher fibre foods once you have recovered.

Starting with low fibre foods at first will limit the amount of poo passing through your bowel and reduce the risk of making your symptoms worse.

In less severe cases of diverticulitis where your doctor does not advise a fluid only diet, the following is suggested:

- follow a low fibre diet to allow symptoms to settle (see table page 3)
- avoid any other foods that you know make your symptoms worse such as spicy foods
- return to eating higher fibre foods once you have recovered.

Reintroducing high fibre foods after symptoms of diverticulitis have resolved

Use the tables on the next 2 pages.

1. During symptoms: Eat foods from the low fibre column
2. When symptoms improve: Include foods from the moderate fibre column
3. When you have no symptoms: choose foods from the high fibre column.

Food type	Low fibre (when you have diverticulitis)	Moderate fibre (when your symptoms are improving)	High fibre (when you have no symptoms)
Cereals	Cornflakes, frosted cornflakes, Puffed rice cereal (plain or chocolate), porridge made with milk	Puffed wheat cereal Barley cereal, Crunchy Nut Cornflakes	All Bran, Bran Flakes, Shredded Wheat, Fruit and Fibre, Malted Wheats, Weetabix, Muesli, Granola, Crunchy clusters
Bread	White bread, soft white roll, English muffin, White pitta, plain naan bread	Brown bread, 50:50 bread, ciabatta, bagel, french stick, tortilla wrap, peshwari naan, toasted crumpet, croissant	Wholemeal bread, seeded bread, wholemeal pitta
Potatoes	Potato shapes, roast potato, mashed potato, new potatoes (Skin removed)	Potato wedges, chips, sweet potato (Skin removed)	Potato wedges, chips or baked potato with skin
Pasta, rice and grains	White pasta eg fusilli, spaghetti, macaroni White rice eg. Basmati, risotto, jasmine, pilau Rice noodles, Egg noodles	Brown rice, plain couscous, flavoured couscous	Wholewheat spaghetti, Quinoa
Meat, fish and alternatives	Tender or soft meat eg. Chicken, turkey, pork, beef, lamb. Fish (no bones, tinned, fresh or frozen) Eggs, Tofu, Sushi Ground nuts, smooth nut butter	Quorn or soya products	Fish with bones eg tinned sardines Meat with gristle or rind Flaked or whole nuts Crunchy peanut butter Seeds
Beans and lentils		Baked beans, chickpeas, lentils, dhal	Red kidney beans, butter beans
Dairy and alternatives	Milk (cow, sheep, goat), cheese, cream, ice-cream, custard, rice pudding, smooth yoghurt		Cheese, ice-cream or yogurt with fruit, nuts, seeds, oats, or granola Weetabix breakfast drinks

Fruit	Apple, orange, blueberries, pear, peaches, plums, ripe banana, tinned fruit (peeled and seeds removed)	Strawberries, raspberries, green banana (Plus low fibre fruit with skin)	Dried fruit (Plus low fibre fruit with skin and seeds)
Vegetables	Green cabbage, Cauliflower, Broccoli, Carrot, Cucumber, Lettuce, Gherkin, Coleslaw, Mangetout (peeled and seeds removed)	Canned tomatoes, Green beans (Plus low fibre vegetables with skin)	Peas, Sweetcorn, Corn on the cob, Onion, Tomato (Plus low fibre vegetables with skin and seeds)
Sweet foods	Biscuits - Rich Tea, Shortcake, Ginger Nuts, Chocolate digestive, Jaffa cakes, Jam filled biscuit. Cakes made with white flour without seeded jam or dried fruit such as chocolate cake, Madeira Trifle, Pavlova, Fruit crumble, Plain scone, Doughnut Mars bar, Maltesers, chocolate spread	Digestive biscuits, Custard creams, Bourbon biscuits, Chocolate chip cookies, Wafers Apple pie	Malt bread (with dried fruit), Cake with seeded jam or dried fruit, Fruit scone, Mince pie, Flapjack, Carrot Cake, Snickers
Savoury foods	Quavers, Wotsits, Skips, Prawn crackers, Quiche, Spring rolls, Sushi, Pancake, Yorkshire pudding, Dumpling	Tortilla chips, Potato crisps, Puri, Sausage rolls, Rice cakes, Cream crackers, Pastry (all types), Hummus, Pizza	Tortilla chips, Twiglets, Popcorn, Bombay mix, Papadum, Rye Crispbread, Oatcakes
Drinks	Water, teas, coffee, squash (cordial), fizzy drinks, Bovril, Marmite, smooth fruit juice		Fruit juice with bits (pulp)

Ideas for meals

	Low fibre diet (when you are suffering with diverticulitis)	High fibre diet (when you have no symptoms)
Breakfast	<p>Cornflakes or Rice Krispies</p> <p>White bread or toast with spread and seedless jam or shredless marmalade</p> <p>Grilled bacon or boiled/poached/scrambled egg and white toast</p> <p>Smooth fruit juice</p>	<p>Porridge with dried fruit</p> <p>Wholemeal/granary bread or toast with margarine, jam or marmalade</p> <p>Wholemeal toast with baked beans or peanut butter</p> <p>Fruit juice</p>
Lunch	<p>White bread sandwich with egg, cheese, meat or fish</p> <p>Poached eggs on white toast</p> <p>Jacket potato (no skin) with tuna, salmon, cheese or cottage cheese</p> <p>Custard, smooth yoghurt, jelly or milk pudding</p>	<p>Wholemeal or granary bread sandwich with egg, cheese, meat or fish</p> <p>Wholemeal or granary toast with baked beans or peanut butter</p> <p>Jacket potato including the skin with baked beans, tuna, cheese, cottage cheese and coleslaw</p>
Evening meal	<p>Meat, poultry, fish, eggs or cheese</p> <p>White rice, pasta, potatoes without skin or white bread</p> <p>Carrots or parsnips</p>	<p>Meat, poultry, fish, eggs or cheese</p> <p>Brown rice, pasta, potatoes with skin or wholemeal bread</p> <p>Peas and sweetcorn</p>
Snacks	<p>Biscuit for example Rich Tea, Jaffa cake</p> <p>Peeled apple</p> <p>Plain or cheese scone and butter</p> <p>Cream cracker and cheese</p>	<p>Fruit cake or scone with butter</p> <p>Dried fruit and nuts</p> <p>Fruit</p> <p>Muesli or cereal bar</p> <p>Wholemeal toast with peanut butter</p>

If you have any questions about your diet please contact your dietitian

Telephone number.....

If you have any other concerns about your diverticular disease, please contact your GP or consultant.



اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો
ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk