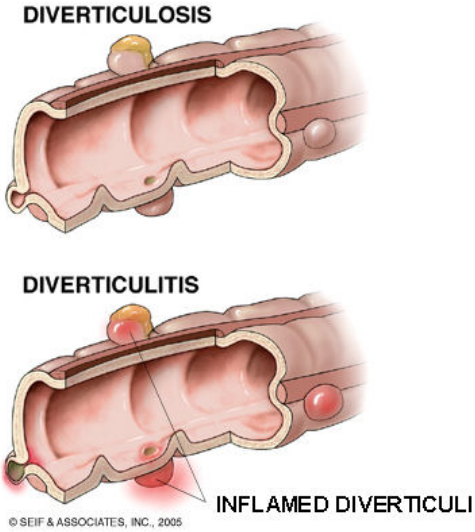
Diverticulosis

Many people have small pouches in their colons that bulge outward through weak spots, like an inner tube that pokes through weak places in a tire. Each single pouch is called a diverticulum. A few or many pouches are called diverticuli. The condition of having diverticuli is called diverticulosis. About 10 percent of Americans over the age of 40 have diverticulosis. The condition becomes more common as we age. About half of all people over the age of 60 have diverticulosis. When the pouches become infected or inflamed, the condition is called diverticulitis. This happens in 10 to 25 percent of people with diverticuli. Diverticulosis and diverticulitis are also called diverticular disease. Most people with diverticulosis do not have any discomfort or problems. If symptoms develop, they may include mild cramps, bloating, and constipation. Other diseases such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and stomach ulcers cause similar problems, so these symptoms do not always mean a person has diverticulosis. You should visit your caregiver if you have these troubling symptoms.



HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- 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. Adding fiber slowly may decrease the bloating and fullness sometimes felt with an immediate high fiber diet.
- The doctor 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.
- 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. Keeping a food diary may help identify individual items in one's diet.

AMOUNT OF FIBER IN SOME FOODS

Fruits

Apple, raw, with skin 1 medium.....3.3 grams
Peach, raw 1 medium.....1.5 grams
Pear, raw 1 medium.....5.1 grams
Tangerine, raw 1 medium.....1.9 grams

Vegetables

Asparagus, fresh, cooked 4 spears.....1.2 grams
Broccoli, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup.....2.6 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.....2.3 grams
Cauliflower, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup.....1.7 grams
Romaine lettuce 1 cup.....1.2 grams
Spinach, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup.....2.2 grams
Summer squash, cooked 1 cup.....2.5 grams
Tomato, raw .....1 gram
Winter squash , cooked 1 cup.....5.7 grams

Starchy Vegetables

Baked beans, canned, plain 1/2 cup.....6.3 grams
Kidney beans, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup.....5.7 grams
Lima beans, fresh, cooked 1/2 cup.....6.6 grams
Potato, fresh, cooked.....12.3 grams

Grains
Bread, whole-wheat 1 slice.....1.9 grams
Brown rice, cooked 1 cup.....3.5 grams
Cereal, bran flake ¾ cup.....5.3 grams
Oatmeal, plain, cooked 3/4 cup.....3 grams
White rice, cooked 1 cup.....0.6 grams

Source: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Available at www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/cgi-bin/nut_search.pl.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:
- You develop *abdominal* (belly) pain.
- An oral temperature above 102º F (38.9º C) develops.
- Repeated vomiting occurs.
- Blood is being passed in stools (bright red or black tarry stools).
- You develop any bowel problems or changes which you have not had before.

Document Released: 09/14/2005 Document Re-Released: 06/15/2009
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