

Diet and the GI Track

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Diet plays an important role in digestive health. The expanding body of nutritional research allows us to provide patients with evidence-based interventions for the prevention, management, and reversal of digestive disorders.

Diverticular disease is a common intestinal disorder. While this condition was almost unknown a century ago, it is rampant today, affecting approximately 60% of people by age 60. Diverticula, or sac-like protrusions, can occur anywhere in the intestinal tract, but most commonly occur in the colon. This disorder can cause abdominal pain, abnormal bowel movements, bleeding, inflammation, and infection. Consequently, one can end up significantly ill, requiring significant hospital stays, surgery and possibly death.

This disorder is a result of environmental causes, most notably, a low fiber diet. The prevalence of diverticular disease in Western countries is due to the high consumption of refined and fiber-deficient foods, such as animal products, sugar, and processed grains. Epidemiological studies show us that populations eating high fiber diets have low rates of diverticulosis.

Furthermore, [studies](#) have shown that consuming a vegetarian diet and a high intake of dietary fiber (70-100 grams per day) are both associated with a lower risk of hospital admission and death from diverticular disease. These dietary changes can decrease inflammation and alter colonic microbial flora. Following a vegetarian diet can lower the risk by 35%, while adopting a strictly plant-based (vegan) diet, can lower your risk by 78%. [Studies](#) have also shown that other lifestyle factors— including exercise, BMI, and smoking—play a role in preventing diverticulitis as well.

By avoiding fiber-deficient foods and choosing a plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds, you can substantially reduce your risk for diverticular disease, as well as many other digestive disorders.