Diet and diverticular disease

What is diverticular disease?
Diverticular disease occurs when small pouches develop in the lining of the large bowel. If these pockets become inflamed or infected, this is known as diverticulitis.

Symptoms can include:
- Altered bowel habits – diarrhoea and/or constipation
- Abdominal pain and bloating
- Bleeding.

What causes diverticular disease?
There is not one known clear cause of diverticular disease though a healthy diet with adequate fibre may help reduce the risk and prevent flare ups from occurring. In addition, being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight and limiting your consumption of red meat (less than 455g cooked red meat per week) is recommended.

Should I avoid nuts, seeds and corn?
There is no evidence that nuts, seeds and corn cause a flare of diverticular disease and they can be included as part of a balanced high fibre diet.

What do I eat while I am unwell?
It is recommended you follow a low fibre diet until pain and discomfort settles.
This will minimise irritation to the bowel while it is inflamed. It is not designed to be followed for a long period of time.

**What do I eat when I have recovered?**

- A high fibre diet is recommended
- Increase fibre gradually to allow your bowels to adjust to the change
- Drink plenty of fluids on a high fibre diet (ask if you are unsure about how much to drink).

**What is fibre?**

Fibre is the part of plant foods that cannot be digested. It passes through the gut largely unchanged.

**What does fibre do?**

The role of fibre is to promote healthy bowel function. It adds bulk to the stool and absorbs water to keep it soft, and easy to pass.

**Which foods are high in fibre?**

- Fruit and vegetables
- Wholegrain breads and cereals
- Nuts and seeds
- Legumes e.g. baked beans, lentils, kidney beans, soy beans

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**FOOD GROUP** | **LOW FIBRE FOODS** | **HIGH FIBRE FOODS**
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**Bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles** | White bread, crumpets, English muffins | Wholemeal/wholegrain bread, crumpets, fruit bread, rye bread
 | Refined breakfast cereals e.g. Rice Bubbles, Cornflakes | Wholegrain breakfast cereals or any with fruit, nuts or coconut
 | White rice/pasta, sago, tapioca, semolina | e.g. muesli, All Bran, Weetbix
 | White flour, cornflour, custard powder | Oats and oat bran, muesli bars
 | Plain sweet and savoury biscuits or cakes | Brown rice/pasta
 | | Quinoa
 | | Wholemeal flour, wheat germ
 | | Sweet and savoury biscuits or cakes made with wholemeal flour, nuts, dried fruit, coconut or seeds

**Vegetables** | Ensure all vegetables are peeled and well cooked | Where possible eat the skin when having vegetables
 | Potato, sweet potato, pumpkin, carrot, zucchini | All other vegetables
 | Cauliflower and broccoli florets | 
 | Tomato and cucumber with skins and seeds removed | 
 | Iceberg lettuce (chop and chew well) | 
 | Asparagus tips, button mushrooms | 
 | Spring onion (green only), onion, | 

This is a consensus document from Dietitian/Nutritionists from the Nutrition Education Materials Online, “NEMO”, team.
Reviewed: February 2019
Due for review: February 2021
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Fruit</strong></th>
<th><strong>Dairy foods</strong></th>
<th><strong>Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, seeds, legumes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - capsicum  
  - Well strained vegetable juice  
  - Tomato puree or paste  
  - Pawpaw and melon (no seeds)  
  - Cherries, seedless grapes  
  - Peeled peaches and nectarines  
  - Well cooked fruit with no skin/pips  
  - Canned fruits except pineapple  
  - Well strained fruit juice  
  - All varieties of milk  
  - Plain yoghurt, custard, Fruche, plain cheese, plain or flavoured ice cream  
  - All meat, chicken or fish  
  - Tofu  
  - Eggs  | - Desserts containing dried fruit, nuts or coconut  
  - Products containing “chunky fruit” pieces  
  - Flavoured milk with added fibre (e.g. Up&Go)  
  - Legumes e.g. baked beans, lentils, soy beans, kidney beans  
  - Nuts and seeds  
  - Nut or seed butters (e.g. peanut butter, tahini)  
  - Popcorn  
  - Coconut  
  - Chocolate with nuts and fruit  
  - Chutney and pickles  | - Where possible eat the skin when having fruit  
  - All fresh fruit  
  - Dried fruit  
  - Boiled lollies, jubes, chocolate with no fruit, nuts or coconut  
  - Spreads without seeds or skin  
  - Soup made from allowed ingredients, Bonox  
  - Gravy, salt, pepper, dried herbs & spices  
  - Products containing “chunky fruit” pieces  
  - Flavoured milk with added fibre (e.g. Up&Go)  |
## Sample meal plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOW FIBRE DIET</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornflakes or Rice Bubbles with milk</td>
<td>Wholegrain cereal such as porridge, All-Bran or muesli with milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apple juice</td>
<td>Banana</td>
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<tr>
<td>White toast, margarine &amp; honey or vegemite</td>
<td>Wholemeal toast</td>
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<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs with white toast</td>
<td>Eggs with wholegrain toast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cup of milk</td>
<td>Baked beans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tinned fruit</td>
<td>Fresh fruit (e.g. apple or pear)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>White bread sandwich with chicken and cheese filling</td>
<td>Wholemeal or wholegrain sandwich or roll with chicken and salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain yoghurt</td>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meat/fish/chicken</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mashed potato</td>
<td>Jacket potato (with skin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steamed pumpkin (no skin)</td>
<td>Broccoli and beans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peeled and cooked carrot</td>
<td>Fresh fruit salad and ice cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice-cream and tinned peaches</td>
<td>Snacks: Fruit (fresh or dried), nuts, wholegrain biscuits or muesli bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Snacks:</strong> Custard, yoghurt, low fibre fruits, plain biscuits or crackers (e.g. rice crackers or plain cracker biscuits)</td>
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For further information contact your dietitian or nutritionist: _____________________