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[Gastroenterology](#). 2012 Feb;142(2):266-72.e1. doi: 10.1053/j.gastro.2011.10.035.

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A high-fiber diet does not protect against asymptomatic diverticulosis

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Abstract

Background & aims: The complications of diverticulosis cause considerable morbidity in the United States; health care expenditures for this disorder are estimated to be \$2.5 billion per year. Many physicians and patients believe that a high-fiber diet and frequent bowel movements prevent the development of diverticulosis. Evidence for these associations is poor. We sought to determine whether low-fiber or high-fat diets, diets that include large quantities of red meat, constipation, or physical inactivity increase risk for asymptomatic diverticulosis.

Methods: We performed a cross-sectional study of 2104 participants, 30-80 years old, who underwent outpatient colonoscopy from 1998 to 2010. Diet and physical activity were assessed in interviews using validated instruments.

Results: The prevalence of diverticulosis increased with age, as expected. High intake of fiber did not reduce the prevalence of diverticulosis. Instead, the quartile with the highest fiber intake had a greater prevalence of diverticulosis than the lowest (prevalence ratio = 1.30; 95% confidence interval, 1.13-1.50). Risk increased when calculated based on intake of total fiber, fiber from grains, soluble fiber, and insoluble fiber. Constipation was not a risk factor. Compared to individuals with <7 bowel movements per week, individuals with >15 bowel movements per week had a 70% greater risk for diverticulosis (prevalence ratio = 1.70; 95% confidence interval, 1.24-2.34). Neither physical inactivity nor intake of fat or red meat was associated with diverticulosis.

Conclusions: A high-fiber diet and increased frequency of bowel movements are associated with greater, rather than lower, prevalence of diverticulosis. Hypotheses regarding risk factors for asymptomatic diverticulosis should be reconsidered.

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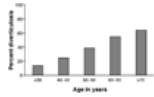


Figure 1 Prevalence of diverticulosis by age...

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[Dietary fiber and asymptomatic diverticulosis.](#)

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