

Care Gram

Dealing with Gas

You produce gas when you swallow air, ingest certain foods, or have trouble digesting certain foods. It is normal to produce gas. Your body passes gas through your rectum or through your mouth when you burp. Most people pass gas about 14 to 23 times per day. Burping before and after meals is common. Some people are bothered by gas more than others.

Gas, at times, can produce uncomfortable symptoms. The colon has several bends. When air becomes trapped in the bends, you may feel bloated or have stomach cramps.

Common causes of gas include:

- Certain foods, such as:
 - Dairy and other products containing lactose (a sugar found in milk) such as milk, milk products, processed foods, and salad dressings
 - All beans
 - Vegetables such as cabbage, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, broccoli, potatoes, and corn
 - Fizzy (carbonated) drinks, such as sparkling water, soda, beer, and champagne
 - Carbohydrates that contain:
 - Insoluble fiber – fiber that does not dissolve in water
 - Fructose – a sugar found in fruit, onions, artichokes, pears, and wheat that may also be used to sweeten some soft drinks and fruit drinks
 - Starchy foods
 - Sorbitol – found naturally in some fruits and used as a sweetener in many diet foods and sugar-free sweets
- Swallowing air – this may occur when you eat too fast, talk while you chew, have loose dentures, chew gum, or suck on hard candy
- Overeating
- Constipation or health problems that cause constipation
- Certain health problems, such as:
 - Lactose intolerance – unable to digest lactose, mostly found in milk and dairy products
 - Intestinal disorders – irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, colon cancer, or any disease that causes a change in the function of the intestines
 - Stomach disorders – peptic ulcer disease and heartburn or GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease)



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Reducing Gas

You cannot stop all gas, but you can reduce the amount of gas you produce.

- Change your diet.
 - Limit or avoid foods that give you gas.
- Take medicine.
 - Certain medicines can be given to reduce the amount of gas you produce such as simethicone and Beano (available over-the-counter).
- Reduce the amount of air you swallow.
 - Do not suck on hard candy or chew gum.
 - Eat more slowly.
 - If you wear dentures, have your dentist check them to ensure proper fit.

When to Contact Your Doctor

Most cases of gas are not serious. However, contact your doctor if:

- Your symptoms increase or change
- You have new symptoms such as constipation, diarrhea, or weight loss
- Your treatment is no longer working
- You develop symptoms such as:
 - Persistent diarrhea
 - Unexplained weight loss
 - Persistent abdominal pain
 - Bloody bowel movements
 - Loss of appetite
 - Vomiting
 - Unexplained fever

At Your Doctor Visit

- Write down the questions you want answered.
- Bring someone with you to help you ask questions and remember what your doctor tells you.
- Write down the names of new medicines, treatments, tests, and instructions.
- Write down the date and time of any follow-up appointments, as well as the reason for the appointment.
- Write down your doctor's contact information in case you have more questions or concerns.