

Tips to Reduce Gas

Everyone has gas; it's normal. It comes from swallowing air when you talk, eat and drink, and from bacteria that live in your digestive tract. These bacteria produce gas by feeding on the undigested carbohydrate and fibre from the foods you eat.

The average person passes gas or burps 12-25 times a day. While normal, gas can be embarrassing and can sometimes cause uncomfortable bloating, pain or discomfort.

Try the following tips to help reduce gas and ease discomfort.



Steps you can take

Swallow less air

- | Eat food slowly and try to relax while you eat.
- | Chew with your mouth closed and save talking until after eating.
- | Drink from a glass instead of a bottle, can or travel mug.
- | Don't use a straw to drink.
- | Avoid chewing gum and sucking on hard candy.
- | Drink fluids lukewarm instead of hot.
- | If you wear dentures, make sure they fit properly.
- | Avoid carbonated drinks like pop, beer and sparkling waters.
- | Avoid overeating. Eat three smaller meals a day. Include snacks only if you're hungry.
- | If you smoke, try to stop.
- | If you have chronic post-nasal drip, talk to your doctor about treatment.

Find out what foods cause you the most discomfort

Some foods are known to cause gas more than others such as legumes (dried peas, beans and lentils), certain vegetables and fruit and foods that have sugar alcohols. Find out which foods make you more 'gassy' and then adjust your food choices to reduce your symptoms. Remember what causes gas for one person, may not cause gas for you. Here are a few tips to get you started.

- | Keep a food diary to track everything you eat and drink and any symptoms like gas or bloating you may have. Choose foods that give you gas in smaller amounts or less often and avoid foods that give you discomfort.
- | Keep track of whether the following vegetables and fruits give you gas. They are known gas triggers. If they do, eat them in smaller amounts. Over time you may be able to eat more. If they don't cause gas, keep them in your diet.
 - | broccoli
 - | cabbage
 - | Brussels sprouts
 - | cauliflower
 - | bok choy
 - | sprouts
 - | lettuce
 - | onions
 - | artichokes
 - | asparagus
 - | pears, pear juice
 - | peaches
 - | apples and apple juice.
- | If legumes cause you to have gas, drain and rinse canned legumes first before eating. If you use dried legumes, pre-soak them in water, drain, rinse well and cook them in fresh water. This will help to reduce the gas and bloating that you get from eating legumes.
- | You can try products that contain the enzyme alpha-galactosidase

(like Beano®), to help digest the carbohydrate in grains, legumes and some vegetables known to cause gas.

Limit or avoid

- | Foods with the sugar alcohols sorbitol, mannitol and xylitol. They are found in sugar-free products.
- | Drinks made with high fructose corn syrup, glucose-fructose or fructose like fruit drinks, pop, sweetened specialty coffees and teas.
- | Check the ingredient list on food labels to know which product to limit or avoid.

Slowly add fibre rich foods like bran or whole grain breads and cereals into your diet. Don't forget to drink extra fluid.

Drink lots of fluids to stay hydrated. Women should aim for at least 2.2 L (9 cups) and men 3 L (12 cups) of fluid a day. Water is calorie-free and a great way to quench your thirst.

Be physically active. This helps to move food through your digestive tract.

- | Include at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week like brisk walking, swimming and dancing.

Talk to a dietitian or your health care provider

- | If you have tried these tips and still have suffer from gas and bloating. Other digestive conditions could be causing your symptoms and you may need more help.
- | About trying an over-the-counter product that helps to reduce gas. Gas relief products that contain simethicone break up gas bubbles in the stomach. This makes gas easier to pass.

Special Considerations

Lactose Intolerance

If you are lactose intolerant you are unable to digest the sugar in milk and milk products and this can cause you to have gas and bloating.

- | Use lactose-free milk and milk products if you are lactose intolerant.

Fortified soy, rice and almond beverage, soy yogurts and soy cheeses are also lactose-free and healthy choices. You may also be able to tolerate yogurt and some cheeses since these foods are lower in lactose.

- 1 Try lactase enzyme drops or tablets found in the grocery store or local pharmacy to help digest the lactose in milk products.

Additional Resources

- 1 Food and Symptom Journal www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=J8frWQ0=&PreviewHandout=bA==
- 1 Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP_PAGuidelines_adults_en.pdf

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