

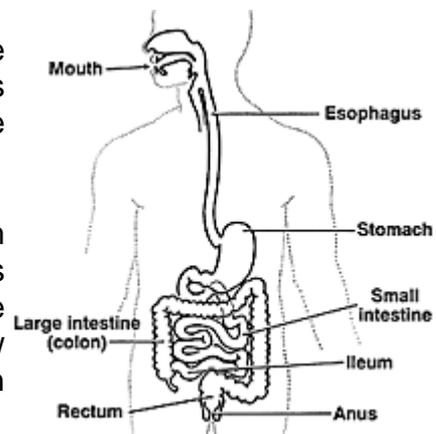
Why Do I Have Gas?

*Why do I have gas?
What foods cause gas?
What can I do about gas?
Points to Remember*

Why do I have gas?

Everyone has gas. Burping or passing gas through the rectum is normal. Because it is embarrassing to burp or pass gas, many people believe they pass gas too often or have too much gas. It is rare for a person to have too much gas.

Most of the time gas is odourless. The odour comes from sulphur made by bacteria in the large intestine. Sometimes gas causes bloating and pain. Not everyone has these symptoms. How much gas the body makes and how sensitive a person is to gas in the large intestine have an effect on how uncomfortable having gas is.



What foods cause gas?

Most foods that contain carbohydrates can cause gas. By contrast, fats and proteins cause little gas.

Sugars

The sugars that cause gas are: raffinose, lactose, fructose, and sorbitol.

Raffinose

Beans contain large amounts of this complex sugar. Smaller amounts are found in cabbage, brussels sprouts, broccoli, asparagus, other vegetables, and whole grains.

Lactose

Lactose is the natural sugar in milk. It is also found in milk products, such as cheese and ice cream, and processed foods, such as bread, cereal, and salad dressing. Many people, particularly those of African, Native American, or Asian background, have low levels of the enzyme lactase needed to digest lactose. Also, as people age, their enzyme levels decrease. As a result, over time people may experience increasing amounts of gas after eating food containing lactose.

Fructose

Fructose is naturally present in fruit, onions, artichokes, pears, and wheat. It is also used as a sweetener in some soft drinks and fruit drinks.

Sorbitol

Sorbitol is a sugar found naturally in fruits, including apples, pears, peaches, and prunes. It is also used as an artificial sweetener in many diet foods and sugarfree sweets and gums.

Starches

Most starches, including potatoes, corn, noodles, and wheat, produce gas as they are broken down in the large intestine. Rice is the only starch that does not cause gas.

Fibre

Many foods contain soluble and insoluble fibre. Soluble fibre dissolves easily in water and takes on a soft, gel-like texture in the intestines. Found in oat bran, beans, peas, and most fruits, soluble fibre is not broken down until it reaches the large intestine where digestion causes gas.

Insoluble fibre, on the other hand, passes essentially unchanged through the intestines and produces little gas. Wheat bran and some vegetables contain this kind of fibre.

What can I do about gas?

Changing what you eat and drink can help prevent or relieve gas. If you feel like you have too much gas, you might want to try these things.

1. Cut down on foods that cause gas.

The amount of gas caused by certain foods varies from person to person. The only way to know your own limits is through trial and error. These are some foods that

cause gas:

- beans
- vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, brussel sprouts, onions, artichokes, and asparagus
- fruits such as pears, apples, and peaches
- whole grains such as whole wheat and bran
- soft drinks and fruit drinks
- milk and milk products, such as cheese and ice cream
- packaged foods that have lactose in them, such as bread, cereal, and salad dressing
- diet foods and sugarfree sweets and chewing gums

2. Drink plenty of water, non-"fizzy" liquids, and clear soup.

Try not to drink liquids that cause gas, like soda and beer. If you do drink these liquids, pour them into a glass first to let some of the "fizz" out.



3. Reduce the amount of air you swallow. Here are some ways to avoid swallowing air:

- Eat slower and chew more to cut down on the amount of air you swallow when you eat.
- Avoid chewing gum and eating hard candy.
- If you smoke, try to cut down or quit.
- If you have false teeth, see your dentist to make sure they fit right.



4. Keep a diary.

Write down the foods (and the amounts) that seem to cause you the most problems.

Points to Remember

- Everyone has gas in the digestive tract.
- People often think they pass too much gas when they don't.
- Passing gas frequently is normal.
- Two ways to reduce the amount of gas you have are to
 - Cut down on the foods that cause gas
 - Reduce the amount of air you swallow
- The most common symptoms of gas are belching, flatulence, bloating, and abdominal pain. However, some of these symptoms are often caused by an intestinal motility disorder, such as irritable bowel syndrome, rather than too much gas