

# What To Do About Gas (Flatulence)



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## Why do I have gas?

Everybody has gas. Gas is just the air that gets in our bellies (gut) and needs to come out. It is normal. Everybody get rid of gas by burping and by passing gas. It is usual to pass gas 15 - 23 times a day. Passing gas may be a problem if:

- It happens more than usual.
- You cannot control when it passes.
- It smells very bad.
- You feel bloated (swollen) and have belly pain.

## What causes gas?

The main reasons for having more gas than usual are:

- When you swallow more air than usual.
- Eating some foods. Foods that may cause gas problems for one person may not be a problem for another person. These foods are known to cause gas in most people:



- Starchy foods, such as some sugars, potatoes, corn, noodles, wheat.
- High fiber foods, such as oat bran, beans, peas, most fruits, dried fruits.
- Some vegetables, such as cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, onions, and sometimes asparagus and artichokes.
- Dairy products, such as milk, cheese, ice-cream (but not yogurt).
- Foods such as sugar free candy and cough drops which have the artificial sweetener sorbitol.
- Fizzy soft drinks.

## What can I do to have less gas?

- To swallow less air:
  - Chew your food more slowly.
  - Sip liquids more slowly.
  - Don't chew gum or suck on hard candy.

(over)

- Notice if you swallow air, or sigh a lot, specially when you are feeling under stress. Once you notice this, you may be able to keep from doing it so much.
- If you wear dentures, make sure they are not loose.
- Don't smoke.
- If you eat the foods on the list on page 1, notice if they cause you to have gas, or not.
- Notice which other foods cause you to have gas.
- Don't eat the foods that you know give you gas.
- There are some over-the-counter (non-prescription) medicines that may help:
  - Antacids with simethicone, such as Mylanta II, Maalox II and Di-Gel may help.
  - Lactase supplements (Lactaid, Lactrase, Dairy Ease) may lessen gas in the belly (gut) by helping dairy products be digested better.
  - Activated charcoal tablets (Charcocaps) may help if you take them before and after a meal.
  - Beano helps your body digest beans and many other vegetables.

## **What if these things do not help?**

If you are having a problem with too much gas, and the things listed here have not helped you, be sure and **tell your healthcare provider** about this problem. Sometimes, other problems may cause too much gas, and your healthcare provider may want to check for these.