MICHIGAN MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Gas (Flatus)

Gas is a normal part of the digestive process. Flatulence is the state of having excessive stomach and/or intestinal gas (waste gas produced during digestion) that is usually released from the anus with sound and/or odor. It is common to pass gas 8– 20 times a day. However, sometimes gas or the inability to control the passage of gas can be a source of physical discomfort or social embarrassment.

Anus- the opening at the bottom of the rectum through which solid waste matter leaves the body.

What Causes Gas?

Gas is caused by the amount of air swallowed and how fast the gastrointestinal tract moves to release the gas. The bacteria living in the colon that helps to digest food by fermentation may also cause gas. Many people are bothered by gas. Very often there is no difference in the amount of gas between people with and without gas related problems. Gas related problems may be caused by how fast or slow gas moves from the stomach out through the rectum. Slow movement causes gas to accumulate and stretch the intestine walls, which can lead to discomfort. A person then may complain of bloating and/or cramping. Medical treatment for flatulence may include antibiotic treatment, increased dietary fiber intake, diet changes and probiotics in the diet (recommended by some, but not all physicians); more serious causes of flatulence (for example, irritable bowel syndrome and small intestinal bacterial overgrowth [SIBO]) may require additional medications.

SIBO- is a disorder of excessive bacterial growth in the small intestine. Causes gas and bloating.

Incontinence of flatus

"Gas incontinence" could be defined as loss of voluntary control over the passage of flatus. It is a recognized subtype of accidental bowel leakage (ABL), and is usually related to minor disruptions of the continence mechanisms. Some consider gas incontinence to be the first, sometimes only, symptom of ABL.

Foods that Cause Gas

- Soluble fiber (found in oat bran, fruits, psyllium husk and beans) could lead to excess gas production from bacterial fermentation.
- Lactose in milk (in those patients with lactose intolerance).
- Fructose in fruits, and high-fructose corn syrup.
- Raffinose in vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli
- Sorbitol in artificial sweeteners and gum may produce more gas as a byproduct of bacterial fermentation.
- Hot spicy foods can speed up the movement of food through your bowels. This can produce additional gas.
- Rich, fatty foods, especially fried foods, may increase gas in some people.
- Malabsorption of certain foods.

Tips for Eating

- Try eating slowly. When you eat fast, you swallow extra air with your food.
- Try to not talk while eating. Extra air while eating can lead to belching and gas production.
- Smoking and chewing gum or candy can also increase your air intake, leading to belching and gas production.
- Repeated belching can worsen problems with bloating and distention. When a person belches repeatedly, they end up swallowing more air than they expel so they end up doing more harm than good.

- Try eating a mint or pineapple after meals to help reduce gas.
- Avoid exercise directly after meals.
- Try eating at the same time each day and eating smaller, more frequent meals. This makes it easier on your intestines to digest the food and can decrease gas.
- Try to eat a balanced diet. Foods with high fiber may initially increase gas production. However, this will decrease over time and can be minimized by increasing fiber slowly. Fiber is necessary for bowel health.
- Excessive flatulence can be reduced or prevented with several methods such as modifying your eating habits or changing your diet to avoid those foods that cause you personally to produce excessive gas. (FODMAP diet)

Tips for Drinking

- Caffeine can increase bowel activity and increase gas.
- Carbonated drinks can increase belching and gas production.
- Avoid drinking with straws. They allow for additional intake of air.
- Beer can increase gas production.
- Avoid drinking fluids with your food. This can increase your air intake and increase gas.
- Stress may increase the sensitivity of the gastrointestinal tract and the severity of gas symptoms.

Gas Reducing Products

Medications containing Simethicone, Gas-X, Charcoal, Phazyme and peppermint can help to reduce gas.

Brand	Type	Estimated Price
Beano	Tablets	$3.19/$9.39/$14.99
	Drops	$5.99

Charcoal Plus DS	Tablets	$14.99
Mylanta Gas Relief	Tablets	$4.61
Phazyme (*highest amount of Simethicone over the counter)	Softgels	$9.69/$15.99
FD Gard	Capsules	8: $12.00, 24: $
Gas-X	Chewable with Maalox (flavors- cherry crème, peppermint crème, wild berry)	$7.19
	Softgels	$13.99
	Extra-strength softgels	$7.79
	Thin strips	$5.29

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