

Helpful Hints for Controlling Gas (Flatus)

Everyone has gas, but for some people the gas may seem extreme, very foul-smelling, and painful. Gas can be let out as flatus (gas passed through the anus) or belching. Changing your diet may help reduce the problem. Different ideas help different people. There are many causes of gas, so it is important to remember that there may be more than just one factor leading up to it.

What You Eat

Some foods produce more gas than others. This is different for every person. Try to avoid some of these foods to see if it makes things better for you. Try to cut them out one at a time, so that you can tell which food the culprit may be.

- Hot, spicy foods can speed up how fast food moves through your bowels, leading to gas.
- Rich, fatty foods, especially fried foods, may increase gas.
- Try to eat a balanced diet. High fiber foods may at first increase the amount of gas you produce but, should lessen over time. Fiber is important, so do not avoid it.
- It may help to keep a food diary. Write down foods that seem to cause the gas.

Drinking

- Caffeine can increase bowel activity and increase gas.
- Carbonated or “fizzy” drinks can increase belching and gas. Try to pour them into a glass first to let some of the “fizz” out.
- Beer can increase gas.
- Drink fluids slowly, instead of gulping them down which can cause you to swallow more air.

- Avoid using straws. You swallow more air sucking a straw than without it.

How You Eat

Changing the way you eat may also help reduce excess gas. This is because we can swallow too much air when we eat a certain way. Here are some tips:

- Eat more slowly.
- Talk less while eating.
- Eat meals at about the same time each day.
- Try smaller meals more often.
- Reduce or avoid chewing gum and hard candy.
- Check your dentures to make sure they are not too loose.

Each person tolerates foods differently. Some foods that cause a lot of gas for some people may cause normal gas for others. The main goal is to reduce gas but still eat a healthy diet. If you try the above tips and still feel like you have excess gas, talk with your doctor to see if there may be other causes of your gas. There are over the counter medicines that may help you relieve or prevent gas. Discuss these with your doctor.

Foods Which May Cause a Normal Amount of Gas (Allowed)

- Protein: meat, poultry, fish, tofu, eggs
- Vegetables: lettuce, some peppers, tomato, zucchini, yellow squash, olives
- Fruits: cantaloupe, honey dew, grapes, most berries, pineapple, oranges

- Carbohydrates: rice, potato chips, popcorn, quinoa, corn tortillas, gluten-free bread
- All nuts when eaten in small amounts
- Low lactose dairy like lactose free milk, cheddar, swiss, most yogurts
- Jello[®], fruit ice

Food Which May Cause a Moderate Amount of Gas (Limit or Avoid)

- Vegetables: asparagus, green bell peppers, kale, green beans, potatoes, corn, okra
- Fruits: mango, plums, banana, raisins
- Carbohydrates: sweet potato, lentils, pastries, bread, cookies
- Dairy moderate in lactose such as cottage cheese, blue cheese

Food Which May Cause a Major Amount of Gas (Limit or Avoid)

- Vegetables: onions, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, mushrooms
- Fruits: apple, peaches, avocado, blackberries, apricots, dates, prunes
- Carbohydrates: bagels, wheat germ, bran cereal/foods, beans, split peas
- Dairy that is high in lactose like regular milk, ice cream, evaporated milk
- Garlic and fennel, ingredients like chicory root, inulin, and sugar alcohols (found in sugarless gums, mints, and other products) like sorbitol and mannitol

Teach Back

What is the most important thing you learned from this handout?

What changes will you make in your diet/lifestyle, based on what you learned today?

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 7/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#516.