

## Gas and Diet

The body produces gas in the stomach and intestines during the normal digestion of food. Swallowed air also causes gas.

Rapid introduction of any high-fiber foods to the diet will lead to gas. If you want to begin eating a higher-fiber diet, begin slowly and make sure you drink plenty of fluids. The following foods and beverages are the ones most likely to cause gas.

### Vegetables

- Cabbage
- Sauerkraut
- Brussels sprouts
- Broccoli
- Asparagus
- Artichokes
- Eggplant
- Radishes
- Cauliflower
- Cucumbers
- Peas
- Celery
- Carrots
- Onions
- Rutabaga
- Turnips

### Fruits

- Apples
- Pears
- Melons
- Peaches
- Bananas
- Apricots
- Raisins
- Prune juice
- Citrus fruits
- Fruit juices

### Other foods

- Dried beans, peas, and lentils
- Whole grains
- Most starches, including potatoes, corn, pasta, and wheat
- Foods containing sugar alcohols, such as sorbitol or xylitol

- Carbonated beverages
- Beer
- Red wine
- Eggs
- High-fat diets (tend to cause more gas because the gas does not move into the small intestine for a longer period of time after eating)
- Fructose, if a person malabsorbs fructose\*
- Lactose, if a person is lactose intolerant (common cause of gas)\*

\*If you believe you are not digesting fructose or lactose correctly, speak with your health care professional, who may request a breath test.

### **Foods to avoid**

You do not need to avoid all of the foods just listed. Many of the foods that lead to gas formation are the healthiest foods. The best idea is to figure out which foods you started eating more of before you got excessive gas. Eliminate them from the diet, and then slowly add them back into your diet, one at a time, to help you figure out which food is the culprit. Once you have this figured out, eat small amounts, increasing the amount incrementally until you can calculate the amount that you can eat without unwanted effects.

### **Causes of gas**

The following can cause gas:

- Stress and anxiety
- Swallowing too much air, which can occur when you:
  - Eat or drink rapidly
  - Smoke
  - Chew gum or suck on hard candies
  - Wear loose dentures
  - Sip through straws or bottles with narrow mouths

### **Normal vs excessive gas**

The average person passes gas 6-20 times a day. The following are some possible causes of excessive gas:

- Peptic ulcer disease
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
- Gastroparesis (delayed gastric emptying)
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Celiac disease
- Lactose intolerance
- Fructose malabsorption
- Crohn's disease
- Ulcerative colitis

### **Treatment**

The following treatment options are used for people with excessive gas:

- Digestive enzymes, if carbohydrate malabsorption is present (available over the counter)
- Lactase supplements prior to eating or drinking lactose-containing foods
- Beano<sup>®</sup>, an over-the-counter medication, which contains the enzyme necessary to break down the sugar found in vegetables and beans; has no effect on fiber or lactose
- Exercise, which helps push gas through the digestive tract
- Prebiotic-rich yogurt or prebiotic supplements
- Antacids or H2 blockers, if reflux is occurring

### **References and recommended readings**

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