



Facts about Gas

When making a change to one's diet, even a positive change like adding additional fruits and vegetables, the digestive system may experience some discomfort. One of the most common complaints is gas and bloating.

Everyone has gas and eliminates it by burping or passing it through the rectum. However, many people think they have too much gas when they really have normal amounts. Most people produce about 1 to 4 pints a day and pass gas about 14 times a day. That's right, 14 times a day. Gas is made primarily of odorless vapors—carbon dioxide, oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, and sometimes methane. The unpleasant odor of flatulence, the gas that passes through the rectum, comes from bacteria in the large intestine that release small amounts of gases containing sulfur.

Although having gas is common, it can be uncomfortable and embarrassing. Understanding causes, ways to reduce symptoms and treatment will help most people find relief. Here are a few things to try when making a healthy change to your diet to control your "wind."

- **Chew your food** – High fiber foods like vegetables require more chewing so that the foods can be better digested. You risk incomplete digestion by swallowing pieces that are too big, and this can cause bacterial overgrowth and gas.
- **Take smaller bites** - For the same reason that it is important to chew; taking smaller bites can help you break your food down more completely. This may also slow down your consumption and result in less gulped air.
- **Add fruits and vegetables to your diet gradually** – Your gut will acclimate to new nutrients, but you need to give it time. Sitting down to a huge plate of beans and kale after living on processed food may be a shock to the system. Add new foods gradually to your diet to avoid discomfort.
- **Eat balanced meals** – The recommendation is to make about 50% of each meal fruits and vegetables. Keep a nice balance of healthy fats, protein, whole grains and dairy in the rest of the meal to allow for a happier digestive system.

Don't give up on the benefits of increased fruit and vegetable consumption and the wonders of fiber because of temporary adjustments in the gut. Working with your body and a little trial and error can mean great improvements to your overall health, even if it means a belch or two (or fourteen!) along the way.

Source: US Dept of Health and Human Services National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse

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