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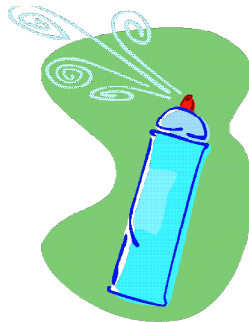
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About Gas and Belching

Gas and belching are the expulsion of air from the digestive tract through the mouth or from the anus. Gas and belching are not diseases or illnesses by themselves, but rather are symptoms of other conditions.

Gas that is expelled by belching arises in the stomach or upper intestinal tract. This gas may be a sign of a difficulty with digestion. If the gas is made worse after eating fatty foods, and if there is discomfort in the upper abdomen, you may have a gallbladder disorder such as gallstones. Gas which is made worse when lying down or bending over may indicate heartburn, or acid reflux, which is caused by stomach acid washing upward into the esophagus, or swallowing tube. Some people refer to this condition as a “hiatal hernia”. Gas which is most severe after meals may indicate stomach irritation or gastritis, or possibly a peptic ulcer. Finally, excessive belching may be a result of swallowing large amounts of air. This may happen with rapid eating, while smoking or chewing gum, or even as a nervous habit. People who do swallow air generally do so without realizing that this is happening.

Gas that is expelled through the anus, also known as flatulence, is nearly always a product of food digestion. Normally, there are many foods in our diet which our own systems cannot digest. Such foods are often called “fiber” or “roughage”, and include the pulp, seeds and skin from fruits, vegetables and grains. In addition, many adults have lost the ability to digest lactose, the sugar in milk. Foods which we cannot digest travel through the small intestine and into the colon, or large intestine. There, they add bulk to the waste material by increasing the water content. Because of this, such foods are often eaten intentionally to prevent constipation. Bacteria in the colon *are* able to digest this food, and the product of *their* digestion is gas and water. For this reason,

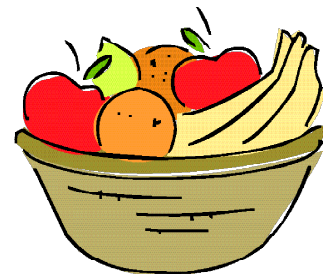


many people develop gas, swelling and even diarrhea when they eat such foods as beans, cabbage, or milk.

At other times, excessive gas may be a sign that the intestines have lost the ability to digest foods they should be able to digest. Such a condition is called maldigestion or malabsorption, and should be evaluated by a doctor, especially if there has been any weight loss.

Listed below are foods to avoid in a low gas producing diet:

- raw fruits and vegetables
- beans
- cabbage
- broccoli
- milk
- brussel sprouts
- whole grains
- cauliflower
- onion
- bran



Sensitivities to individual foods will vary from person to person.

The treatment of gas depends upon its cause. For example, medications to reduce stomach acid will reduce symptoms of acid reflux. Surgery may be required to correct gallbladder problems. Sensitivities to specific foods may be best addressed by dietary modification. Lactose intolerance may be prevented by avoiding lactose-containing foods, or by taking enzyme supplements to assist in the digestion of lactose. Relief from lower intestinal gas may be obtained from over-the-counter products such as Gas-X which helps to expel excessive gas, and Bean-O which may sometimes help reduce gas production.



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