

GMHC'S Nutrition & Wellness Program

GAS & BLOATING

Everyone has gas and produces about 1-3 pints per day. Fortunately most gas is odorless - less than 1% smells. However, medications tend to increase this amount, as well as the bloating associated with it, causing discomfort and pain.

CAUSES OF GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT CHANGES IN THE HIV+ POPULATION

- Direct effect by the virus itself on GI tract
- Medications, especially protease inhibitors
- Long term antibiotic use can reduce the amount of good bacteria in the gut

POSSIBLE CAUSES OF GAS & BLOATING

- Physical Changes in the Stomach/Intestines
- Emotional Stress
- Food Choices
- Medications

EMOTIONAL STRESS

- Try to make eating a pleasant and relaxed situation. Eating and drinking while stressed may cause you to swallow air and may interfere with digestion.
- Close your mouth while eating. Eat slowly and chew foods well.
- Drink slowly, sipping liquids rather than gulping, especially when taking multiple pills with water.
- Avoid smoking.

TIPS WHEN MAKING FOOD CHOICES:

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

Lactose intolerance occurs when you have reduced amounts of lactase, an enzyme found in the gut that is needed to breakdown lactose, the sugar found in milk (including low-fat and skim) and dairy products (including cheese and ice cream.) The following tips may help prevent gas and bloating due to lactose intolerance:

- Lactase-treated milk (*Lactaid* is the most common brand), or *Lactaid* pills or drops may be purchased.
- Yogurt may be digested easier than milk since some of the lactose is already broken down.
- Hard cheeses such as parmesan may be better tolerated than soft cheeses, but this varies depending on the severity of the lactose intolerance.
- Read labels on supplements or medicines if you are extremely lactose intolerant to make sure milk or lactose is not part of the ingredients.

BEANS

- Beans, while nutritious and tasty, can be produce gas.
- When cooking beans from scratch, drain the soaking water, rinse the beans well, and cook in clean water.
- Epazote, a Mexican and Caribbean cooking herb, is used in bean dishes to reduce gas.
- Try cooking beans with a washed, unpeeled, whole orange. Add the orange to the pot with the beans, cook the beans, and remove and discard the orange when the beans have finished cooking.
- If you are just starting to eat beans, eat small amounts until your body adjusts.
- *Beano*, an over-the-counter product, contains a food enzyme that breaks down the complex sugars in beans can be purchased to make beans more digestible and thus less gas-producing.

CRUCIFEROUS & OTHER VEGETABLES

- Cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts) as well as other vegetables (onions and sweet green peppers) can cause gas and should be eaten in small amounts.
- *Beano* can be purchased to make these vegetables more digestible and thus less gas-producing.

BEVERAGES

- Avoid using straws when drinking beverages.
- Carbonated beverages such as mineral water, sparkling juices, and soda should be consumed in moderation.

CHEWING GUM

- Chewing gum and sucking on candy may cause you to swallow air which can cause gas.
- Sugarless gums containing sorbitol can cause diarrhea and gas when fermented in the colon.

LACTOBACILLUS ACIDOPHILUS

- Taking antibiotics, even for a short period of time, can upset the favorable bacterial balance in the gut. *Lactobacillus acidophilus* is a friendly bacteria you can buy in a liquid or powder form to help restore the balance.
- Purchase only acidophilus that has been stored in the refrigerated section. This is the best bet that you are getting live acidophilus cultures.
- Take the acidophilus 1-3 hours before or after taking the antibiotic.
- Yogurt is a good source of acidophilus, but not all brands contain acidophilus (look for words like "contains live cultures"); try *Brown Cow* or *Stonyfield* brands.

OTHER REMEDIES FOR GAS & BLOATING

- Eating a low-fat diet may help speed stomach emptying, allowing gases to move along the digestive tract. This may also help with reducing the bloat and discomfort.
- Herbal remedies may provide relief. A tea made with boiling water, honey and one of the following may be helpful: lemon, fennel seed, mint leaves, fresh ginger (crushed), or oregano.
- Burnt toast may also provide relief.
- Unfortunately, reducing gas is somewhat trial and error. Having a good idea of the most likely causes, and paying close attention to the foods you have eaten when more gas seems to occur, is usually the most effective way. Keeping a food diary is helpful for many people.
- Papaya enzymes may help relief gas and bloating.

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Common Gas Producing Foods

Keep in mind that each person is unique, not all foods have the same gas/bloating affects.

Vegetables

Beets
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Cabbage
Carrots
Cauliflower
Chicory
Corn
Cucumber
Leeks
Lettuce
Onions
Parsley
Parsnips
Pepper, sweet green
Pumpkin
Salsify, black
Spinach
Squash

Grains and Cereals

Amaranth
Barley
Corn
Millet, proso
Oat bran
Oat flour
Rice bran
Rye
Sorghum, grain
Wheat bran
Wheat flour, white
Whole wheat flour

Nuts and Seeds

Cottonseed flour
Pistachios
Sesame flour
Sunflower flour

Legumes

Adzuki beans
Alfalfa
Black-eyed peas
Black mung beans
Broadbeans
Chickpeas
Common beans
Cow peas
Field beans
Garden peas
Green beans
Green mung beans
Horse gram
Lentils
Lima beans
Lupins
Mung beans
Peanuts
Pigeon peas
Pole beans
Red kidney beans
Split peas
Soybeans
Soyflour
Winged beans

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