

Overview

Some people feel that they pass too much gas or burp too frequently, both of which can be a source of embarrassment and discomfort. The average adult produces about one to three pints of gas each day, which is passed through the anus 14 to 23 times per day. Burping occasionally before or after meals is also normal.

The amount of gas produced by the body depends upon your diet and other individual factors. However, most people who complain of excessive gas do not produce more gas than the average person. Instead, they are more aware of normal amounts of gas. On the other hand, certain foods and medical conditions can cause you to make excessive amounts of gas.

Symptoms

Some people feel they pass an excessive amount of gas or burp too frequently. Other people notice bloating and crampy abdominal pain. You may feel this pain in areas where gas can become trapped, such as in bends in the colon, which occur naturally in the area under the liver (upper to mid-right part of the abdomen), and in the area under the spleen (upper to mid left part of the abdomen).

Causes of increased gas

The vast majority of people who are bothered by gas do not produce excessive amounts of gas. However, there are several conditions that may lead to increased gas formation.

Swallowed air — Chronic, repeated belching can occur if you swallow large amounts of air (ie, aerophagia). Aerophagia is typically an unconscious process, and is often associated with emotional stress. Treatment focuses on decreasing air swallowing by reducing anxiety, when it is considered to be a cause, as well as on eating slowly without gulping and avoiding carbonated beverages, chewing gum, and smoking.

Foods that cause gas — Certain foods contain specific carbohydrates called "FODMAPs" (fermentable oligo-, di-, and monosaccharides and polyols). FODMAPs are poorly absorbed and can result in bloating and gas production in some people. A diet that is low in FODMAPs (which are found in wheat, barley, milk, and certain fruits and vegetables, among other foods) may reduce the amount of gas you produce. It's a good idea to talk to your health care provider if you want to try limiting or avoiding certain foods. He or she can give you guidance on what to limit and how to make sure you're still getting enough nutrients in your diet.

Starch and soluble fiber can also contribute increase gas. Potatoes, corn, noodles, and wheat produce gas, while rice does not. Soluble fiber (found in oat bran, peas and other legumes, beans, and most fruit) also causes gas. Some laxatives contain soluble fiber and may cause gas, particularly during the first few weeks of use.

Lactose intolerance — Lactose intolerance occurs when your body has difficulty digesting lactose, the sugar found in most milk-based products ([table 1](#)). Symptoms of lactose intolerance include diarrhea, abdominal pain, and flatulence after consuming milk or milk-containing products. More detailed information about lactose intolerance is available separately.

Intolerance to food sugars — Some people are intolerant of sugars contained in certain foods. Two common examples are fructose (contained in dried fruit, honey, sucrose, onions, artichokes, and many foods and drinks

that contain "high fructose corn syrup") and sorbitol (a sugar substitute contained in some sugar-free candies and chewing gum).

Diseases associated with increased gas — A number of diseases can cause difficulty absorbing carbohydrates, which can lead to increased gas. This problem can occur in people with celiac disease (a disease caused by intolerance to a protein contained in wheat), short bowel syndrome, and in some rare disorders.

Diagnosis

Most people with gas and bloating do not need to have any testing. However, symptoms such as diarrhea, weight loss, abdominal pain, anemia, blood in the stool, lack of appetite, fever, or vomiting can be warning signs of a more serious problem; people with one or more of these symptoms usually require testing.

Tests may include:

- Examination of stool for blood, abnormally high levels of fat (steatorrhea), or a parasite (eg, *Giardia*).
- A lactose tolerance test, described above.
- X-ray examination of the small intestine.
- A test to examine the inside of the stomach and/or colon (upper endoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy).
- A blood test for celiac disease.

Treatment

- **Diet recommendations** — Avoid foods that appear to aggravate your symptoms. These may include milk and dairy products, certain fruits or vegetables, whole grains, artificial sweeteners, and/or carbonated beverages. Keep a record of foods and beverages to help to pinpoint which foods are bothersome

Product	Lactose content (grams)
Milk (1 cup)	
Whole, 2 percent, 1 percent, skim	9 to 14
Buttermilk	9 to 12
Evaporated milk	24 to 28
Sweetened condensed milk	31 to 50
Lactaid milk (lactose-reduced)	3
Goat's milk	11 to 12
Acidophilus, skim	11
Yogurt, low fat, 1 cup	4 to 17
Cheese, 1 ounce	
Cottage cheese (1/2 cup)	0.7 to 4
Cheddar (sharp)	0.4 to 0.6
Mozzarella (part skim, low moisture)	0.08 to 0.9
American (pasteurized, processed)	0.5 to 4
Ricotta (1/2 cup)	0.3 to 6
Cream cheese	0.1 to 0.8
Butter (1 pat)	0.04 to 0.5
Cream (1 tablespoon)	
Light, whipping, sour	0.4 to 0.6
Ice cream (1/2 cup)	2 to 6
Ice milk (1/2 cup)	5
Sherbet (1/2 cup)	0.6 to 2

If you are lactose intolerant, do not consume products that contain lactose , or you can use a lactose-digestive aid such as lactose-reduced milk or over-the-counter lactase supplements (eg, Lactaid tablets or liquid). Take a calcium supplement if you avoid milk products. Avoiding foods high in fructose will help if you have fructose intolerance.

- **Over-the-counter medications** — Try an over-the-counter product that contains simethicone, such as certain antacids. Simethicone causes gas bubbles to break up and is widely used to relieve gas, although its benefit is questionable.