

What I need to know about Gas



NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH
National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse



U.S. Department
of Health and
Human Services

What I need to know about Gas



NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH
National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse

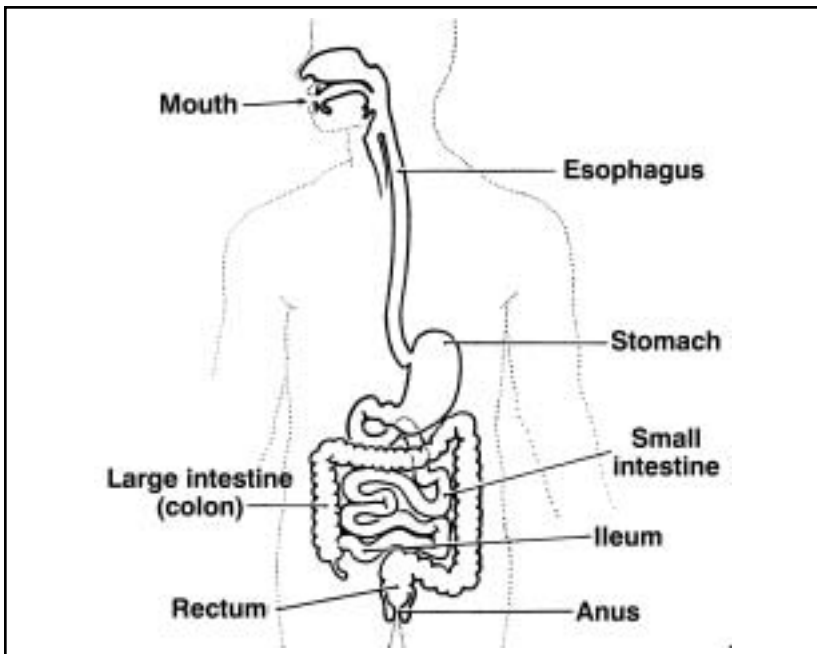
Contents

Why do I have gas?.....	1
What can I do about gas?	2
Points to Remember.....	6

Why do I have gas?

Everyone has gas. Burping or passing gas through the rectum is normal. Because it is embarrassing to burp or pass gas, many people believe they pass gas too often or have too much gas. It is rare for a person to have too much gas.

Most of the time gas is odorless. The odor comes from sulfur made by bacteria in the large intestine. Sometimes gas causes bloating and pain. Not everyone has these symptoms. How much gas the body makes and how sensitive a person is to gas in the large intestine have an effect on how uncomfortable having gas is.



What can I do about gas?

Changing what you eat and drink can help prevent or relieve gas. If you feel like you have too much gas, you might want to try these things before going to the doctor.

1. Cut down on foods that cause gas.

The amount of gas caused by certain foods varies from person to person. The only way to know your own limits is through trial and error. These are some foods that cause gas:

- beans
- vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, brussels sprouts, onions, artichokes, and asparagus
- fruits such as pears, apples, and peaches



- whole grains such as whole wheat and bran
- soft drinks and fruit drinks
- milk and milk products, such as cheese and ice cream
- packaged foods that have lactose in them, such as bread, cereal, and salad dressing
- dietetic foods and sugar-free candies and gums



2. Drink plenty of water, non-“fizzy” liquids, and clear soup.

Try not to drink liquids that cause gas, like soda and beer. If you do drink these liquids, pour them into a glass first to let some of the “fizz” out.



3. Reduce the amount of air you swallow. Here are some ways to avoid swallowing air:

- Eat slower and chew more to cut down on the amount of air you swallow when you eat.
- Avoid chewing gum and eating hard candy.
- If you smoke, try to cut down or quit.
- If you have false teeth, see your dentist to make sure they fit right.



4. Keep a diary.

Write down the foods (and the amounts) that seem to cause you the most problems. Also keep track of the number of times you pass gas.

If you are still troubled by gas, you may want to see your doctor. Take your diary with you to help you answer the doctor's questions about eating habits and symptoms.



Points to Remember

- Everyone has gas in the digestive tract.
- People often think they pass too much gas when they don't.
- Passing gas frequently is normal.
- Two ways to reduce the amount of gas you have are to
 - cut down on the foods that cause gas
 - reduce the amount of air you swallow

National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse

2 Information Way
Bethesda, MD 20892-3570
Phone: 1-800-891-5389 or (301) 654-3810
Fax: (301) 907-8906
Email: nddic@info.niddk.nih.gov
Internet: www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov

The National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NDDIC) is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). The NIDDK is part of the National Institutes of Health under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Established in 1980, the clearinghouse provides information about digestive diseases to people with digestive disorders and to their families, health care professionals, and the public. NDDIC answers inquiries, develops and distributes publications, and works closely with professional and patient organizations and Government agencies to coordinate resources about digestive diseases.

Publications produced by the clearinghouse are carefully reviewed by both NIDDK scientists and outside experts.

This publication is not copyrighted. The clearinghouse encourages users of this booklet to duplicate and distribute as many copies as desired.

This booklet is also available at www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health



National Institute of Diabetes and
Digestive and Kidney Diseases

NIH Publication No. 04-4156
January 2004