

Patient Information

Pelvic Floor Service Managing bloating and wind

Introduction

This information about managing bloating and wind is intended for patients under the care of the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Pelvic Floor Team. There has been little research in this area so we cannot directly recommend any particular remedies but we hope that this information will help with your symptoms. Please ask if you need any further information or advice.

Why do we produce wind?

Wind (flatus) is a bi-product of digestion as bacteria in the gut help to break down food as it passes through. The speed (motility) at which your digestive system works, the foods you eat, your lifestyle and so on will affect this process.

Some foods are more difficult to digest and food that is eaten quickly and not chewed properly is not fully broken down so the bacteria in your bowel have more to work on. Bacteria produce gases of which some are absorbed into your bloodstream reaching the lungs to be exhaled and only a small amount of these gases are released as wind (flatulence).

How much gas do we produce per day?

We produce around 25 litres of gas per day mostly due to bacterial action within the large bowel (colon). Much of this gas is reabsorbed and only around 1-2 litres is expelled per day in the form of wind.

Can any medical conditions increase wind?

You may be windier if you suffer from chronic constipation, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), coeliac disease (inability to process gluten) or have lactose intolerance. Other medical conditions, not listed here, may also increase wind and bloating.

What foods may increase wind?

- Foods containing a high amount of non-absorbable carbohydrate include artichokes, beans, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, raisins, pulses, lentils, onions, prunes, apples and Brussels sprouts.
- Foods containing unrefined cereal fibre ie wheat bran.
- Avoid eating fruit straight after a meal as it ferments behind the food you have already eaten.
- Sorbitol, an artificial sweetener often found in slimming products and sugar-free gum.

- Fructose, a type of sugar found in fruit juice
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG) found in ready meals and particularly in Chinese food and some other take-away and processed foods may increase bloating
- Fizzy drinks
- Chewing gum

FODMAPs

There has been much research recently into FODMAP foods and IBS. These are foods which contain complex carbohydrates that are not able to be broken down during digestion. Onions, garlic and wheat-based foods are particular triggers. Further information is available online or by referral to a dietician.

Does exercise help?

Yes, mild physical activity has been shown to increase the clearance of gas in people with IBS.

What remedies are available?

- **Flatulence medications**
Over the counter remedies containing alpha-galactosidase such as **Beano** contain natural enzymes which help to break down complex carbohydrates before they start to ferment and produce gas.
- **Antispasmodics**
Mebeverine hydrochloride (**Colofac**) or Hyoscine hydrobromide (**Buscopan**) are smooth muscle relaxants which reduce abdominal cramps and bloating.
- **Soluble fibre**
Reduce constipation by increasing your intake of soluble fibre such as oats or linseeds (up to 1 tablespoon daily).
- **Charcoal tablets**
Available over the counter. Absorbs gases in the digestive system to relieve the pain of trapped wind.
- **Peppermint oil capsules**
Taken before meals these have been shown to reduce bloating and abdominal cramps. Unsuitable if you suffer with acid reflux.
- **Simeticone** - combined with Loperamide (**Imodium Plus**) reduces wind associated with chronic diarrhoea
- **Probiotics**
Dietary supplement drinks encourage the growth of 'friendly bacteria' to improve bloating and discomfort although studies show that responses to treatment are variable.
- **Herbal teas**
Peppermint, chamomile or fennel tea taken after meals can improve digestion. Of these, fennel appears to be most beneficial.
- **Pineapple or papaya**
Eat a few chunks **before** a meal to aid digestion

- **Deodorizer pads**
Charcoal pads worn in your underwear absorb odour

Is wind a known side effect of any medicines?

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as Ibuprofen
- Oral antifungal medicines
- Statins for the control of cholesterol
- Some laxatives especially bulk forming laxatives such as Fybogel, Isphagula or Regular
- Varenicline (Champix) used to help people stop smoking

You will probably need to try a number of different approaches to find what works best for you but if you need more information or advice please speak to a member of the team. A separate IBS factsheet is available on request.

Contact details for further information

Pelvic Floor Nurse Specialist

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital

Telephone: 01743 261083 (24hr answerphone)

Further information is available from;

- **Patient Advise and Liaison Service (PALS)**
PALS will act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, they can also help you get support from other local or national agencies. PALS, is a confidential service.

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691

Princess Royal Hospital, Tel: 01952 282888

Other Sources of Information

- **The Pelvic Floor Society**

A national multi-professional body involved in supporting excellence in clinical practice, education and research, clinical standards, patient information and engagement in the commissioning of pelvic floor services.

Telephone: 020 7973 0307

Website: www.thepelvicfloorsociety.co.uk

- **Bladder and Bowel Foundation**

For more information about bladder and bowel conditions, treatment and support

Telephone: 0870 770 3246

Website: www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

- **NHS 111**

A fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Telephone: 111 (free from a landline or mobile)

Website: www.nhs.uk

- **Patient UK**

Provides leaflets on health and disease translated into 11 other languages as well as links to national support/self help groups and a directory of UK health websites.

Website: www.patient.info

- **Self-Help UK**

This is a directory of self-help groups and charities.

Website: www.selfhelp.org.uk

Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

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