



## INTESTINAL GAS

Millions of Americans complain of “too much gas”. Many conditions can cause this, but in the vast majority of people, no significant illness can be found. “Too much gas” can be divided into three common complaints:

1. Too Much Belching - This usually results from the person swallowing too much air. This excess air is then burped out periodically. The person is encouraged to eat slowly, chew with the mouth closed, avoid gulping air when eating or drinking, and avoid carbonated beverages, including sparkling water, sodas, and beer. Stress can lead to the tendency to swallow frequently, adding to air swallowing. Gas-X? or other simethicone-containing products may be helpful.
2. Too Much Gas from the Rectum - The normal person has an average of 13 passages of gas by rectum everyday. Most gas is formed in the large intestine by bacterial digestion of certain carbohydrates (starches and sugars). The following groups of foods may possibly be gas-forming. Pay attention to whether any foods in these categories seem to cause gas problems for you. Eliminating those foods for a trial period and observing the results can show you which foods are causing your problem. Avoiding those foods may then help. You do not have to eliminate all foods in all of these categories. Beano® helps to digest some of these foods and may also reduce gas formation:
  - A) VEGETABLES AND LEGUMES (BEANS)
  - B) FRUITS
  - C) WHEAT AND BRAN PRODUCTS
  - D) MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS - Some people lack the intestinal enzyme called lactase necessary to digest lactose (milk sugar), and may develop gas and other intestinal complaints when they eat lactose-containing foods such as milk, ice cream, cheese and puddings. Yogurt and Acidophilus milk contain cultures that help break down the lactose and tend to cause fewer problems for lactose-intolerant people. There are also product lines available, including Lactaid? and Dairy-Ease?, that feature lactose-reduced milk, drops of lactase enzyme that can be added to any milk to break down the milk sugar, and lactase enzyme tablets that can be taken by mouth prior to eating lactose-containing foods to aid in digestion.
  - E) SUGARS - including sorbitol, this is used in candies and chewing gum, usually labeled as “sugar-free”, and fructose, used in many candies and drinks.
3. Abdominal Fullness and Bloating - These people do not actually have excess gas. Studies have shown that they have the normal amount of gas in the intestines. What is abnormal is the exaggerated way the intestines contract and move the gas along. This complaint can sometimes be treated with “antispasmodics” but it is still sometimes helpful to try diet changes as one would for too much gas from the rectum (see above) to attempt to decrease gas production.

As with many other physical complaints, the individual should be examined for the presence of underlying medical conditions that could be causing the complaint, as well as for the presence of anxiety, sleep disorders, or emotional distress, which can also be the cause.

**For more information, ask your health care provider, or**

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/Intestinal-gas/DG00048>

[http://www.medicinenet.com/intestinal\\_gas\\_belching\\_bloating\\_flatulence/article.htm](http://www.medicinenet.com/intestinal_gas_belching_bloating_flatulence/article.htm)

