

Anti-Gas Diet

Gas in your digestive tract can cause discomfort and even embarrassment if it triggers recurring belching and flatulence, but it's not life-threatening. If you're experiencing ongoing and bothersome gas, talk to your doctor so that he can work with you to determine the cause and the best course of action for your situation. Gas can be treated by limiting or avoiding foods that trigger gas, or by taking a digestive enzyme to reduce gas in the digestive tract.

The Lowdown on Gas

First know that everyone has gas to some extent. Most foods that contain carbohydrates have the ability to cause gas. This is because some carbohydrates are poorly digested in the small intestine and pass into the large intestine where colonies of bacteria break them down. The fermentation process of bacteria creates various gases, such as hydrogen, carbon dioxide and methane as a side effect. The most common symptoms of gas are bloating, abdominal pain, burping and flatulence. Intestinal gas is typically caused by the fermentation of undigested food, such as plant fiber, in the colon. Gas can also form when your digestive system doesn't completely break down certain components in foods, such as gluten or the sugar in dairy products and fruit.

Common Culprits

Beans; vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and Brussels sprouts; and fiber-rich or starchy foods, such as whole wheat and bran, can cause gas. Rice is the only starchy food that does not cause gas, according to Johns Hopkins Medicine. Milk is another common culprit. Milk contains a sugar called lactose that your body breaks down using the enzyme lactase. Lactose is poorly digested if you don't have enough lactase, which can result in gas. In addition, certain fruits, such as pears, apples and peaches, as well as sugar-free candy, which contains sugar alcohols, can cause gas.

Eating Fewer Gas-Producing Foods

Many healthy foods cause gas, so you shouldn't completely eliminate them. However, eating a smaller amount per meal or removing these foods temporarily and adding them back in slowly may help decrease excess gas. Foods that may cause gas include beans; whole grains, whole-wheat bread; certain vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, onions, mushrooms, artichokes and asparagus; and certain fruits such as pears, beans, peas, lentils, beer' apples and peaches. A natural sugar called lactose found in milk can also cause gas. In addition, sugar-free foods and snacks contain sugar alcohols, which are difficult to digest and may cause gas. If dairy products are a problem, try low-lactose or lactose-free varieties.

Foods That Cause Very Little Gas

Proteins cause very little gas, so lean meats, fish, eggs and poultry won't aggravate flatulence symptoms. Avoid frying or other cooking methods that add lots of fat. Foods that cause less gas include cooked or canned fruit without the peels, smooth peanut butter, refined breads, angel food cake and pastas made from refined flour. Other foods that cause less gas include white rice, refined hot cereals, mashed potatoes without skins, carrots, summer squash, low-fat cheese, yogurt and cottage cheese.

Anti-Flatulence Tips

Eating too quickly and swallowing too much air can increase gas in your intestines. Sipping beverages from a straw or chewing gum increases the amount of air you swallow. Avoid using straws or sucking on hard candies. Even though dietary fat does not cause gas, limiting high-fat foods helps reduce bloating and discomfort. Over-the-counter digestive aids may help relieve excess gas by providing enzymes that help your body digest certain sugars. Other over-the-counter products relieve the bloating and discomfort caused by gas.

Temporarily cut back on high-fiber foods. Fiber aids digestion, but many high-fiber foods are also great gas producers. After a break, slowly add fiber back to your diet. Add products such as Beano to high-fiber foods to help reduce the amount of gas they produce.

Eat slowly. Try to make meals relaxed occasions. Eating when you're stressed or on the run can interfere with digestion.

Get moving. It may help to take a short walk after eating. Try an over-the-counter remedy. Some products such as Lactaid or Dairy Ease can help digest lactose. Products containing simethicone (Gas-X, Mylanta Gas) haven't been proved helpful, but they're commonly used to help break up bubbles in gas.