

GAS, BLOATING AND BELCHING: POSSIBLE CAUSES AND WHEN TO GO TO THE DOCTOR

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Gas (flatulence or belching) is very common and is not harmful. Flatulence is gas that is released by the rectum. Belching (or burping) is gas that is released from the mouth. The buildup of gas or food contents within the digestive tract can lead to an upper body fullness feeling often described as bloating. Gas is commonly caused by swallowing air; you swallow air into your stomach when you eat food or drink fluids. Gas can also form as a byproduct of bacteria in your intestines when digesting food. Some foods that can increase gas being formed include high fiber foods such as: beans, broccoli, lentils, asparagus, peas, onions, cabbage and whole grain foods. Other foods, such as dairy products or carbonated drinks, can also cause a lot of gas to form. Poorly fitting dentures can cause gas as a lot of saliva (with air bubbles in it) is swallowed. Chewing gum or sucking hard candy can also produce swallowed gas.

POSSIBLE CAUSES:

- Carbonated beverages such as soda or beer
- Beans
- Chewing gum or sucking hard cand
- Drinking dairy
- Improperly fitted dentures
- Eating food too fast

MEDICAL CARE AND TREATMENT OPTIONS:

Gas, bloating and belching are not usually due to medical problems but rather; they are symptoms that are often due to the way your body normally works.

WHEN TO SEEK EMERGENCY ATTENTION?

- If you experience chest pain, sweating, shortness of breath, painful breathing or dizziness/lightheadedness while having gas pain you should seek emergency medical attention.
- If you have nausea, vomiting, persistent or worsening abdominal pain, bright red stools, dark black or sticky/tarry stools or vomiting of a coffee ground-like material. The dark black material in the vomitus or stool may be blood.
- If it has been longer than usual since your last bowel movement and you are no longer passing gas through your rectum. This is when the normal flow of material through the digestive tract is blocked.

SOURCE(S): American College of Gastroenterology; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders

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