



Coping with wind

Everyone has wind (gas). It's normal. Most of it comes from air we swallow when we are eating and drinking, especially if we are busy and in a hurry, or if we don't take the time to chew our food properly.

Some food and fluids also contain air – like whipped cream or egg whites, fizzy soft drinks and waters. Drinking through a straw and chewing gum can also lead to swallowing air. Artificial sweeteners are also thought to exacerbate wind.

Can medicines help?

There are a group of over the counter medicines that can help to relieve the symptoms of wind and colic if you occasionally feel uncomfortable. They are based on a substance called *Simeticone* which is also used to treat colic in babies.

Ask your pharmacist, GP or specialist healthcare team for advice, especially if you are having regular or severe problems with indigestion, pain or wind in your abdomen.



020 7940 1760 | feedback@bowelcanceruk.org.uk
www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/yourdiet

 [@Bowel_Cancer_UK](https://twitter.com/Bowel_Cancer_UK)
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Wind

Some food and drinks can exacerbate wind. These can include:

- » Cereals
- » Beans and pulses
- » Some vegetables
e.g. broccoli, cauliflower, sprouts, asparagus, onions, leeks
- » Fruit, especially juices
- » Wine / beer

The wind is produced by the bacteria that naturally live in your bowel, as they work to break down the small pieces of food.

Excess wind trapped in the digestive system can leave you feeling bloated, full, sick and very uncomfortable. It can cause sharp spasms of pain and colic (pain that comes and goes) in your abdomen.

Wind can also cause noisy rumbling and gurgling in your stomach which leads to frequent burping and belching. Wind can also cause a reflux of acid up into your oesophagus (gullet) after eating.

It can also be deeply embarrassing if you are passing wind frequently via a stoma, or if you are unable to control it in company.

The good news is that it is possible to take some very simple steps on your own that could help to reduce the problem and make you feel more comfortable.

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Tips to reduce excess wind

- 1** **Identify the potential causes of wind in your diet and try to reduce them** (you can use the food and symptom diary for this)
- 2** **Avoid missing meals**, even if it means you have to take a snack and a drink with you when you go out
- 3** **Sit upright** when you are eating and try to avoid lying down straight after a meal. Air can travel into the small bowel (intestine) from the stomach much more easily if you are lying down
- 4** **Chew your food slowly** and well, taking time to sit down and enjoy eating. This is the first stage of an effective digestive process
- 5** **Drinks:** Try still varieties of drinks instead, or leave fizzy drinks until they are “flat”. Try not to drink large amounts of fluids with your meals





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- 6 Beans:** Avoid eating large quantities on their own, but enjoy them as part of a mixed meal with other foods
 - 7 Vegetables:** Try cooking them gently (at lower temperatures, for longer). This will make them softer and easier to chew well before you swallow them
 - 8 Oats, barley and ground linseeds** may help to relieve wind caused by constipation and slow bowel habit
 - 9 Some herbs and spices** are thought to support your digestion, e.g. fennel seed, star anise, cloves, cardamom, chamomile, ginger, peppermint and aloe vera
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Other tips

- 1** Some people find that **probiotic supplements** and **“live” yoghurts** may also help to relieve bloating. Be aware that taking probiotics supplements for the first time can temporarily worsen symptoms before they improve
- 2** **Regular, gentle exercise** can help your body to relax and reduce wind
- 3** **Clockwise massage** of the abdomen with/without essential oils can help to increase abdominal pressure and help you to pass trapped wind
- 4** **Some simple yoga positions** can also help to gently increase abdominal pressure and move trapped wind. Lie on your back with legs stretched out. Gently pull one knee up to your chest and hold for a few seconds. Repeat with the other knee
- 5** **Avoid processed foods.** Processed convenience foods and ready meals can also be difficult for the body to digest, and may also cause some irritation in the gut