Remedies for gas pain? [1]

Alice!

How do I cure gas pain?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Gas pains — whether they're sharp, jabbing pains, cramps, or a general feeling of being bloated — are uncomfortable, unwanted, and totally natural. Everyone passes gas, and most people get gas pains sometimes. So what can be done to get some relief?

Because gas is so common, a place to start to remedy the situation may be with over-the-counter or non-prescription options. These may include:

- **Products with alpha-galactosidase**: To address some of the common culprits of gas, alpha-galactosidase can be used to help break down carbohydrates in beans and other vegetables when taken before a meal.
- **Lactase supplements**: For those who are intolerant to the sugars found in dairy products (called lactose), taking these supplements may aid in its digestion. Those who are currently pregnant or breastfeeding are advised to check in with their health care provider prior to using.
- **Simethicone-containing products**: These work to break up the gas in the gastrointestinal tract so that it's easier and less painful to pass.
- **Activated charcoal**: This remedy is may result in fewer gassy symptoms when taken before and after a meal. However, the research available on its effectiveness hasn’t demonstrated a distinct benefit. It has a few drawbacks as well; it may interfere with the absorption of some medications and may stain the mouth and clothes of those who use it.

List adapted from [Mayo Clinic][2].

After the moment and gas pain has passed, it’s worth considering what might have caused it in the first place and how to prevent it in the future. Gas is often associated with the foods you eat or drink (“Beans, beans, they’re good for your heart. The more you eat, the more you …”). **High fiber foods**
dairy products (for some folks), sugar substitutes, and carbonated beverages have all been voted “Most Gassy”. It also may not be what you eat, but how you eat — eating quickly has been implicated as a gas-inducing behavior. Beyond what or how food is eaten, there may be some health issues and conditions that increase the likelihood of gas, gas pain, and bloating as symptoms, including constipation, food intolerances, bacterial overgrowth in the small intestine, and digestive conditions such as diverticulitis, ulcerative colitis, and Crohn’s disease. Talking with your health care provider about whether any of these issues could be contributing to your gas pains may inform how best treat it in relation to the condition.

However, if the toots and the tummy aches you’ve mentioned aren’t associated with a health condition, there are still some other tips that may help flat line the flatulence:

- **Be mindful of food and beverage choice.** Avoid or reduce any gas-inducing foods and beverages; that is to say if you notice that after eating or drinking certain items you get that rumble in your stomach, it may be wise to choose differently in the future. For those with a sensitivity to certain ingredients, such as sugar substitutes or dairy items, reading labels may be a practice to add to the food and drink selection process. If you’ve recently upped the amount of fiber-rich foods in your diet, decreasing them for a bit to give your digestive system a break might help (once you’re feeling a bit less gassy, you can then slowly add them back). Reducing the amount of fatty foods for a time might also be wise, because they’ll slow down the transit of food in the body making gas more likely.

- **Slow down at meal times.** Allow more time for chewing and swallowing and try smaller portions on your plate. Eating smaller amounts may allow for the digestive system to better handle what you’re consuming and potentially reduce gas.

- **Nix the drinking straw.** Sucking may draw more air into the stomach, contributing to bloating and gas. Hard candies or chewing gum may similarly increase the amount of air in the digestive tract.

- **Consider lifestyle habits.** Being active regularly can help decrease the likelihood of being constipated (which contributes to gas). Smoking cigarettes may also increase the amount of air swallowed, so either quitting or not starting is advised. Also, drinking enough water on a daily basis can help keep your digestive train running smoothly.

Before leaving this subject behind, if gas and gas pain is interfering with your day-to-day life, it may be time to get it checked out. If what you’re experiencing is accompanied by changes in bowel movements (such as frequency, consistency, or the presence of blood in stools), nausea, vomiting, constipation, or diarrhea, these are all key details to mention in a medical visit. Seeking emergency attention is also advised for those experiencing chest pains or lasting pain in the abdomen along with gas pain.

Here’s hoping this information helped let the air out of a gastrointestinal concern!

Alice!

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Published date:
Feb 15, 2008
Last reviewed on:
Aug 10, 2018

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