Help! Farts flow freely following anal sex! [1]

Alice,

The few times I have tried anal sex, I get a horrible case of the farts afterwards lasting hours. I do not have the ability to hold it and it's very embarrassing. Is there anything I can do ahead of time or after to stop this?? Thanks

Answer

Dear Reader,

While it may be embarrassing and uncomfortable at times, farting is a natural part of life. In fact, on average, a healthy person passes gas 13 to 21 times a day. Your experience of dealing with excess gas following anal sex is also common. It could be that the thrusting motion during anal sex allowed for more air to enter into the rectum which then allowed for a free flow of flatulence. If you’re feeling uncomfortable prior to anal sex, you might also take a look at your eating habits to identify any foods that could lead to that gassy build-up. Read on for more information about why this may be happening and what you can do about it.

There’s a lot of research on gas production itself, but less is known about gas associated with anal sex. However, it’s common to be gassy after anal sex. This may be because air gets pushed into the rectum by way of thrusting movements, and the increased air pressure in the rectum and colon may lead to an accumulation of gas, abdominal pain, and bloating. Therefore, increased farting after anal sex could function as your body’s efforts to naturally release the build-up of air and relieve the rectum and colon from that pressure. It’s also possible that farting occurs more frequently and easily after anal sex because the sphincter muscles, which are the muscles that control the anus’ opening, are loosened to accommodate penetration and aren’t as able to keep the gas in check.
It’s helpful to keep in mind that gas is also a product of swallowed air and the breakdown of digested food in the colon. Drinking rapidly, chewing gum, using tobacco products, drinking carbonated beverages, sucking on hard candy, hyperventilating, or eating certain foods increase the opportunities for added gas production. If you’re looking to alleviate gassy symptoms before or after anal sex, you could try limiting your consumption of foods linked to increased gas production — generally, foods that contain sugars, starches, or high fiber content. These include:

- **Raffinose**: This is a complex sugar found in beans, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, asparagus, other vegetables, and whole grains.
- **Lactose**: This is a natural sugar found in milk and milk products, such as cheese, ice cream, and processed foods, such as bread, cereal, and salad dressing.
- **Fructose**: This is a sugar found in onions, artichokes, pears, and wheat. Fructose is also used as a sweetener in some soft drinks and fruit drinks.
- **Sorbitol**: This is a sugar found naturally in fruits, including apples, pears, peaches, and prunes. Sorbitol is also used as an artificial sweetener in many dietetic foods and sugar-free candies and gums.
- **Starches**: Most starches, including potatoes, corn, noodles, and wheat produce gas as they’re broken down in the large intestine.
- **Soluble fiber**: This is the fiber that dissolves easily in water and takes on a soft, gel-like texture in the intestines; is found in oat bran, beans, peas, and most fruits.
- **Insoluble fiber**: This is the fiber typically found in wheat bran and some vegetables, which passes essentially unchanged through the intestines and produces little gas.

List adapted from John Hopkins Medicine. [2]

Staying away from food associated with gas build-up on days you plan on having anal sex may decrease the chance of frequent farting afterwards. If you’re using a sex toy, try using a smaller toy to limit the loosening of the anal muscles and build-up of air during penetration. While it might be tempting to use an enema before anal sex to minimize waste products and gas, they aren’t recommended because chronic use can cause constipation and increase gas accumulation. Use of similar products may also irritate the colon and increase the risk of HIV transmission, as the tissues may be damaged, allowing for easier transmission of the virus.

If your symptoms don’t go away, you experience any pain while releasing gas, notice your symptoms suddenly change, or, along with gas, are experiencing symptoms such as constipation, diarrhea, or weight loss, you may consider talking with your health care provider. They can conduct a physical exam to check for any tenderness and swelling in your abdomen and request information about your eating habits to determine the best path forward.

Kudos to you for being proactive about your physical and sexual health. For more information about anal sex [3], check out the Sexual & Reproductive Health [4] category in the Go Ask Alice! archives.

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