



IBS and Gas

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The Relationship Between IBS and Gas

Flatulence is one of the most common and unpleasant symptoms of IBS. In addition, IBS is also associated with other digestive troubles such as diarrhea and constipation. Why do all these symptoms occur and how can they be managed?

About IBS

Scientists are continually learning and researching about the relationship between IBS and gas. Although the exact cause is not fully understood, there are certain factors that trigger the development of this condition. In a healthy individual, the muscles of the walls of the small and large intestine contract and relax rhythmically, and thus the food is moved from the stomach to the rectum. In IBS, this pattern is changed – the contractions can be either more intense or last longer - leading to symptoms such as gas, bloating and diarrhea, or become weaker and less frequent, causing constipation and dry stools.

The nerves that control your digestive tract are also involved. They receive signals when your intestines contain too much gas and stool, and thus you experience abdominal discomfort.

In recent years, studies reveal that patients with IBS have frequent troubles digesting certain foods - for example lactose from dairy products and sugars such as fructose and sorbitol. There is also an overgrowth of bacteria in the small intestines associated with IBS, and this disruption in the normal flora appears to be responsible for flatulence and other digestive symptoms.

Tips to Manage Flatulence

1. **Pay attention to your diet.** Some foods are more likely to trigger symptoms- for example chocolate, spices, fats, milk, fruits, beans, vegetables in the cruciferous family (cabbage, cauliflower, and broccoli), alcoholic and carbonated drinks. Your doctor can also test if you have specific food intolerances. A food diary can be very useful because can help you see what kind of foods you consumed before you experienced symptoms. Try to eliminate those foods from the diet and noticed if you see improvements. Try to eat your meals every day at the same time, to keep regulate the bowel's function. Eat small meals and experiment with the amounts of fiber in your diet (although fibers are beneficial, they can cause more gas and bloating)
2. **Avoid sugars.** Australian researchers developed a dietary plan known as FODMAP. FODMAP stands for Fermentable Oligo-, Di- and Mono-saccharides, and Polyols, which are sugars found in common foods. Rather than trying FODMAP diet (or any other dietary plans) on your own, would be best to work with a dietician to get an individualized program.
3. **Avoid stress.** Stress can aggravate all IBS symptoms, including flatulence. Try to incorporate in your life some stress management techniques such as meditation or yoga.
4. **Stay fit.** Working out regularly helps improve the contractions of your intestines, plus it helps relief stress

and feel better about yourself.

5. **Supplement.** Many natural supplements had been evaluated for IBS management. Probiotics had been found to help decrease flatulence, abdominal pain and diarrhea. Some studies show that peppermint can help relax the smooth muscles in the intestines – choose enteric coated peppermint to avoid heartburn. Acupuncture had been also found beneficial for managing IBS.