Gas (Flatus)

Gas is a normal part of the digestive process. It is common to pass gas 10 – 20 times a day. However, sometimes gas or the inability to control the passage of gas can be a source of physical discomfort or social embarrassment.

**What Causes Gas?**
Gas is caused by the amount of air swallowed and how fast the gastrointestinal tract moves to release the gas. The bacteria living in the colon that helps to digest food by fermentation may also cause gas. Many people are bothered by gas and feel that they have an excessive amount of gas in their intestines. Very often there is no difference in the amount of gas between people with and without gas related problems. Gas related problems may be caused by how fast or slow gas moves from the stomach out through the rectum. Slow movement causes gas to accumulate and stretch the intestine walls, which can lead to discomfort. A person then may complain of bloating and/or cramping.

**Foods that Cause Gas**
- Soluble fiber (found in oat bran, fruits, psyllium husk and beans) could lead to excess gas production from bacterial fermentation.
- Lactose in milk (in those patients with lactose intolerance)
- Fructose in fruits, and high-fructose corn syrup
- Raffinose in vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli
- Sorbitol in artificial sweeteners and gum may produce more gas as a byproduct of bacterial fermentation.
- Hot spicy foods can speed up the movement of food through your bowels. This can produce additional gas.
- Rich, fatty foods, especially fried foods, may increase gas in some people

**Tips for Eating**
- Try eating slowly. When you eat fast, you swallow extra air with your food.
- Try to not talk while eating. Extra air while eating can lead to belching and gas production.
- Smoking and chewing gum or candy can also increase your air intake, leading to belching and gas production.
- Try eating a mint or pineapple after meals to help reduce gas
- Avoid exercise directly after meals
- Try eating at the same time each day and eating smaller meals more frequently. It is easier on your intestines and can decrease gas.

Michigan Bowel Control Program
• Try to eat a balanced diet. Foods with high fiber may initially increase gas production. However, this will decrease over time. Fiber is necessary for bowel health.

**Tips for Drinking**
• Caffeine can increase bowel activity and increase gas.
• Carbonated drinks can increase belching and gas production.
• Avoid drinking with straws. Straws allow for additional intake of air.
• Beer can increase gas production.
• Avoid drinking fluids with your food. This can increase your air intake and increase gas.

Stress may increase the sensitivity of the gastrointestinal tract and the severity of gas symptoms.

**Gas Reducing Products**
Medications containing simethicone, Gas-X, charcoal, and peppermint can help to reduce gas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Estimated Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drops</td>
<td>$5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charcoal Plus DS</td>
<td>Tablets</td>
<td>$14.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mylanta Gas Relief</td>
<td>Tablets</td>
<td>$4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phazyme</td>
<td>Softgels</td>
<td>$9.69/$15.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chewable with Maalox (flavors- cherry crème, peppermint crème, wild berry)</td>
<td>$7.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Softgels</td>
<td>$13.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extra-strength softgels</td>
<td>$7.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thin strips</td>
<td>$5.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disclaimer: This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Talk with your doctor if you have questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options.

©2011 The Regents of the University of Michigan
Last Revised 09/2011