

# Abdominal Bloating

Abdominal bloating is not a disease but rather a condition with many possible causes.

## Common Causes of Bloating

Bloating can be caused by gaining weight; overeating; constipation; **functional dyspepsia**, indigestion not caused by an obvious disease; **irritable bowel syndrome**, a disorder that may cause abdominal pain, cramps, diarrhea, and constipation; **lactose intolerance**, an inability of the small intestine to digest milk products; **small bowel bacterial overgrowth**, an abnormally large number of bacteria growing in the small intestine; medications; acarbose; artificial sweeteners; menstruation; and menopause.

## Disorders That May Cause Bloating

More serious conditions that may cause bloating include **ascites**, a buildup of fluid between the lining and the abdominal organs, usually caused by such diseases as congestive heart failure or cirrhosis of the liver; **celiac disease** (sprue), an intolerance of gluten; **ovarian cancer**; **giardiasis**, an intestinal parasite infection; **diverticulosis** or **diverticulitis**, pouches on the wall of the digestive tract; and **bowel obstruction**.

## Treatment

Abdominal bloating can be curbed by making such changes in your eating habits as avoiding swallowing too much air, which can occur while chewing gum, drinking carbonated beverages, smoking, using a straw, or eating too fast. Foods that cause gas include cabbage; legumes; onions; artichokes; mushrooms; turnips; some fruit such as pears, apples, and peaches; whole grains; sugar-free candy; juice; high-fructose corn syrup drinks; fatty foods; and sweets. Avoiding milk and dairy products may help determine whether you are lactose intolerant. Eliminating gluten from your diet may also help you determine whether you have celiac disease. Some over-the-counter medications to reduce gas may help with bloating, as may probiotics.

## When to Seek Treatment

You should see your doctor when you have abdominal pain; find blood in your stools or on toilet paper after wiping; or experience diarrhea, vomiting, or weight loss.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- National Library of Medicine  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003123.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003123.htm)
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)  
[digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/gas](http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/gas)  
[digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/ibs/index.aspx](http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/ibs/index.aspx)

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