

# Bloated belly: *Ways to get relief*

Most people have felt a bloated stomach after a big meal. Usually, the belly feels overly full. It can make clothing feel tighter. The belly may look swollen. Bloating is usually caused by too much food or air and gas getting trapped in the intestines.

But some people get bloated even when they didn't eat too much. In some cases, it can be downright painful. The best way to address painful bloating is to find the cause and know how you can treat it.



## BLOATING CULPRITS

The most common causes include:

- **Dairy foods.** If you notice bloating after eating cheese, ice cream, or drinking milk, you could have lactose intolerance.
- **Gum.** Swallowing air while chewing can cause bloating.
- **Eating too much fiber at once.** Fiber is great for you, but if your body isn't used to it, you can get bloated and uncomfortable. Increase the amount you eat gradually.
- **Bowel problems.** Being constipated or having irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can cause painful bloating. Drinking plenty of water can help with constipation and fiber absorption.
- **Menstrual cycles.** Some women get bloated because their body holds extra water before or during their periods.



## TREAT BLOATING AT HOME

Many times, bloating can be managed at home. Here's how:

- Write down what you eat and drink. Record when you get stomach pain or bloating.
- Cut back on gum.
- Avoid carbonated drinks.
- Drink plenty of water to keep the bowels moving. Don't use a straw when drinking.
- Eat enough fiber. Start with fruits and vegetables. Eat only small amounts of beans, lentils and other gas-causing foods until you get used to them.
- Watch out for sugar-free foods. Some artificial sweeteners can cause bloating and gas.
- Ginger, peppermint, chamomile or fennel herbal teas may help. Always ask a doctor before using herbs if you have a health condition or take any medicines.
- Over-the-counter anti-gas medicines with simethicone help move gas bubbles out of the body.



## WHEN TO SEE YOUR DOCTOR

Call a doctor or seek immediate medical care if you notice bloating with:

- Blood with bowel movements (stool)
- Losing weight without making an effort
- Nausea or vomiting
- For women: menstrual bleeding between periods or after menopause
- Fever
- Severe pain that won't go away

These could be signs of a serious health issue that needs treatment.

