

Managing Gas

Excessive gas is a common side effect of cancer treatments. Chemotherapy can cause both increased and decreased motility (diarrhea and constipation) of the intestines, and both can cause gas. Chemotherapy may also change the bacterial flora in the intestines, which can cause cramping and gas. Lactose intolerance—whether you had it before or developed it because of cancer treatments—may cause more abdominal pain, cramping, or gas.

Tips for Managing Gas



WORD OF CAUTION

Dull aches and cramping can be related to some chemotherapy drugs. Sharp pain that does not resolve in a few minutes may be an indicator of a more serious problem. If the pain in your stomach is sharp and does not resolve, contact your doctor.

- Keep a diary of what types of foods you eat and when you eat them. Note the effects different foods have on your bowels, gas, and any pain. This will help your health care team decide what is best for you.
- Reducing or eliminating the following foods may improve symptoms:
 - Foods with a lot of fiber, including foods with added fiber
 - Vegetables that cause gas, including broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, bok choy, onions, and beans
 - Dairy foods that have lactose, like milk, cheese, and yogurt
 - Sugar substitutes with sugar alcohols, such as mannitol and sorbitol
 - Fried or fatty foods
 - Carbonated drinks
 - Fiber supplements
 - Chewing gum
- Avoid swallowing too much air by eating slowly and drinking without straws.
- Eat smaller meals, and chew with your mouth closed.
- Manage lactose intolerance by choosing lactose-free milk or milk alternatives like soy, rice, or almond milk.
- Before starting any over-the-counter medications or remedies, including probiotics, talk to a member of your health care team.

