

Managing excessive farting and smells

Pelvic Floor Service

Information for Patients

Produced: January 2023
Updated: September 2023
Review: January 2026
Leaflet number: 1358 Version: 1.1

Introduction

If you have a problem with your bowel, sometimes you are not able to control farting (also referred to as wind or flatus). Sometimes, the fart can also smell. This can lead to feelings of embarrassment. There are solutions to this if it is a problem for you. Different people find different things helpful.

Remember that we are all a lot more sensitive to our own smells than other people are. If you know that you have passed wind, you may be looking for a smell that no one else has noticed.

Food and eating

Some foods are more likely to produce more wind than others. Foods that are high in fibre are digested by normal bacteria in the bowel. This produces gas. Food that produces a lot of wind for one person may not do so for someone else. It maybe helpful to test and see if eating certain foods makes things worse for you. Avoiding those foods then helps. The following list does not include all foods and you may find that something not on this list is windy for you:

- Beans (including baked beans and kidney beans)
- Peas, lentils and other pulses.
- Nuts (especially peanuts)
- Salad (especially cucumber)
- Bran cereal or other foods high in bran.
- Brown rice or wholemeal pasta.
- Cabbage, cauliflower, carrots and broccoli

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

- Radishes
- Eggs
- Shellfish
- Milk and milk products
- Muesli
- Jacket potato skins
- Leeks, swede and parsnips
- Onions
- Dried fruit

Hot spicy food, especially if you are not used to it, can increase the speed with which food travels along the bowel. This can increase wind production. Rich, fatty food affects some people.

Sometimes, the way in which you eat means that you swallow a lot of air with your food:

- Eat slowly.
- Chew each mouthful carefully (especially if the food is high in fibre).
- Take care not to swallow air.
- Avoid talking too much while you are actually eating.

If you are in a hurry, do not be tempted to wash down half-chewed food with a gulp of drink as this will make it more difficult to digest. Eating little and often, rather than 1 huge meal a day can make it easier for your intestines to cope and can lower the amount of wind. Regular meal times can help, as an empty bowel produces more wind and gurgles. You should not get into the habit of taking too many snacks between meals.

All of this does not mean that you should make your life difficult or miserable by having to think about everything that you eat and not eating foods that you like. However, do try to eat a balanced diet, and to notice if any of the above makes a difference for you. Then you have a choice.

Information on a balanced diet is available here: www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/

Drinking

- Caffeine (in tea, coffee and cola) is likely to upset the bowel for some people and may increase wind. Try decaffeinated tea and coffee for a week or so to see if this makes a difference.
- Fizzy carbonated drinks and beer (or lager) can also increase wind for some people. Usually you will burp this up, but a few people seem to have more wind with these drinks.
- Too much alcohol intake will cause more wind than usual the next day for most people.
- Eating and drinking at the same time can also increase the amount of air that you swallow, so try drinking before or after food, rather than with it.
- Some people find that herbal tea calms their bowel and that less wind seems to be produced. Camomile, peppermint and fennel teas are each found useful by some people.

Personal hygiene

If you are troubled by any leakage from the bowel, good personal hygiene will be important to prevent smells:

- After having a poo, always wipe gently with soft toilet paper, or moist toilet paper (available from larger pharmacies and some supermarkets). Discard each piece of paper after 1 wipe, so that you keep the area you have just wiped clean.
- Whenever possible, wash around the bottom after a poo. A bidet is ideal (portable versions are available). If this is not possible, you may be able to use a shower attachment with your bottom over the edge of the bath. Or use a soft disposable cloth with warm water. Avoid flannels and sponges, as they can be rough and are difficult to keep clean. Sometimes, a little creativity is needed especially if you are away from home. Some people find that a small plant spray, watering can or jug filled with warm water makes washing easy on the toilet or over the edge of the bath.
- Do not be tempted to use disinfectants or antiseptics in the washing water as these can sting, and many people are sensitive to the chemicals in them. Just plain warm water is best.
- Avoid using products with a strong perfume such as scented soap, talcum powder or deodorants on your bottom.
- Choose a non-scented soap (for example 'Simple', or a baby soap). Many baby wipes contain alcohol and are best avoided.
- Wear cotton underwear to allow the skin to breathe.
- Avoid using any creams or lotions on the area, unless advised to do so.
- Sphincter strengthening exercises.

Sphincter strengthening exercises

Sometimes, doing some exercises to strengthen the muscles and their speed of reaction can improve your control of wind. Please ask your nurse, doctor or physiotherapist if this is likely to be helpful for you. (See leaflet 1356 [Exercising the sphincter muscles to help improve bowel control](#))

Controlling or disguising smells

If you fart a lot and cannot control it, some of these ideas may help:

- Try to ensure good ventilation of the room you are in.
- Use an aromatherapy oil burner, scented candle, joss stick or incense stick, or a dish of pot pourri (remember to renew regularly as the scent wears off).
- Use an odour eliminator spray such as Neutradol spray; Febreze AIR Effects spray or Vivactive urine odour air freshener spray
- Many solid block air fresheners work all the time - available from chemists or supermarkets.
- Essential oils such as lavender or lemon oil can be useful.

- Try striking a match and then blowing it out immediately and allowing the small plume of smoke to drift into the room. You may like to keep a box of matches and an egg cup for the used match, in your toilet.
- You can also try drops to put into the toilet before having a poo to neutralize odours, for example, Vipoo, Poo-Pourri or Just a drop.

Products you may find helpful

There is almost no scientific research on this, so we cannot actually recommend any products. But some people do tell us that something has been helpful. Again, this varies from person to person. Some people find that one or more of the following products reduces wind or the smell from wind:

- Peppermint oil.
- Pepto-bismol, Rennie's and other over-the counter indigestion medicines.
- Charcoal tablets.
- Mint tea.
- Cardomom seeds (chewed).
- Aloe Vera capsules or juice.
- Probiotic drink (from the yoghurt counter at the supermarket for example, Yakult, Actimel).
- Acidophilus, a bacteria that lives in the gut. This is available as tablets from health food shops. If you can find a good health food shop, advice is often available on a wide range of other products which may be worth trying.

Contact details

Functional Bowel Service: 0116 258 3775

Please leave a message and we will respond in between clinics if possible. If you need advice about your treatment or side effects outside normal working hours, please contact your GP or NHS 111 or in life-threatening circumstances call the emergency services on 999. This will depend on the nature and urgency of your concern.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk