

Managing excessive farting and smells

Pelvic Floor Service

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Information for Patients

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Introduction

If you have a problem with your bowel, you may find it hard to control your farts (also called wind or flatus). Sometimes, the fart can also smell. This can make you feel embarrassed. There are things to help with this and is different for each person.

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 can make you pass more wind than others. Foods high in fibre are digested by normal bacteria in the bowel. This makes gas. Food that make a lot of gas for a person may not do so for someone else. You may want to test and see if eating certain foods makes things worse for you. Try avoiding those foods to see if it helps. The list below 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
- Radishes

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- 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 them, can make the food move through your bowel faster. This can cause more wind. Rich, fatty food can also affect some people.

Sometimes, the way you eat means you swallow a lot of air with your food. Try to:

- 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, try not to swallow food quickly with a big drink. This can make it harder for your body to digest the food. Try eating little and often rather than 1 huge meal a day. This can make it easier for your intestines and 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. Try to notice if any of the above makes a difference for you. 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 cause more 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 cause more wind for some people. Often you will burp this up. For a few people they seem to have more wind with these drinks.
- Drinking too much alcohol can 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. Try drinking before or after food, rather than with your meal.
- Some people find that herbal tea calms their bowel and helps reduce wind. Camomile, peppermint and fennel teas are seen useful by some people.

Personal hygiene

If you are troubled by any leakage from the bowel, good personal hygiene will help 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). Throw away each piece of paper after 1 wipe. This is so that you keep the area you have just wiped clean.
- Whenever you can, wash your bottom after a poo. A bidet is best to use and portable versions are available. You can also use a shower attachment with your bottom over the edge of the bath. Or use a soft disposable cloth with warm water. Try not to use 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 use disinfectants or antiseptics in water as these can sting. Many people are sensitive to the chemicals in them. Just plain warm water is best for cleaning.
- 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). Do not use baby wipes as most contain alcohol.
- Wear cotton underwear so your skin stays cool and dry.
- Avoid using any creams or lotions on the area, unless advised to do so.
- Do exercises to strengthen the muscles that hold in poo (sphincter strengthening exercises).

Sphincter strengthening exercises

Doing 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. Visit <https://yourhealth.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/> and search for 'Exercising your sphincter muscles to help improve bowel control' or leaflet 1356.

Controlling or disguising smells

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

- Try to have good ventilation in 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. These are 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 right away. This lets 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. You can use for example, Vipoo, Poo-Pourri or Just a drop.

Products you may find helpful

There is almost no scientific research on this. We cannot recommend any products. But some people do tell us that something has been helpful. Again, this is different for each person. Some people find that 1 or more of the following products reduces wind or the smell from wind:

- Peppermint oil.
- Pepto-bismol, Rennies 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.

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