

Managing flatus (wind) incontinence

This leaflet outlines some possible causes of excessive flatus (wind) and gives advice on minimising and managing it.

About flatus

Flatus (farting or passing wind) is a normal function of the bowel (gut). We pass roughly 1-1.5 litres of gas through the anus (back passage) every day. There are things you can do if you fart a lot or it's smelly. Sometimes, it can be a sign of a health condition but your symptoms may not be related to any underlying problem.

Causes of increased wind:

- Chewing gum
- Fizzy drinks
- Smoking
- Poor-fitting dentures
- Eating too fast and / or not chewing food properly
- Wrong posture when eating meals
- Stress (we swallow more air when experiencing stress)
- Eating and drinking at the same time
- Certain medications – but please do not make any changes without consulting your GP!
- Malabsorption problems (inability to absorb certain nutrients from your food)
- High fibre foods such as brassica vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage etc.) or beans and lentils
- Not eating regular meals and / or long periods of time between meals
- Excess body weight
- Food intolerances
- Constipation

And generally, the 'hurry, worry, curry lifestyle' many of us lead!

How can I reduce symptoms?

Simple changes such as dietary and lifestyle changes can reduce symptoms for as many as 25% of people. These include things such as:

- Keeping a food diary – it can be a useful tool in examining your eating and lifestyle habits and identifying which foods cause you excessive wind
- Stop smoking
- Removing fizzy drinks from your diet

- Doing regular pelvic floor and [anal sphincter exercises](#)
- Reducing or managing stress, if possible (speak to your GP about an appropriate referral to Talking Therapies, if required)
- Exercise can also help reduce wind as it assists in gut motility (you move, your gut moves)
- Peppermint tea – try a small cup about half an hour after each meal
- Abdominal massage (speak to your specialist nurse or physiotherapist for advice)
- There are simple devices which can be inserted into the back passage to help prevent accidentally passing wind when not convenient to do so. These are available on prescription (please speak to your specialist nurse in clinic and she can demonstrate and help you with this and give you the appropriate training to maintain your safety)
- Preventing and treating constipation.

Further information

We hope you find this advice helpful. If you have any queries or require advice or help, please speak to your pelvic floor specialist nurse on telephone: 0118 322 -6890

You can also speak to a pharmacist about excessive or smelly farts they may be able to give you advice on things that can help – for example, anti-flatulence tablets or special underwear and pads that absorb smells.

Your GP can also help you with lifestyle changes such as losing weight, reducing stress or stopping smoking so don't be afraid to ask him or her for help.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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