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## Bloating and wind

Some people with [Crohn's](#) or [Colitis](#) might feel bloated and gassy. Your tummy might make loud noises, or you might fart more than usual. This can be uncomfortable and embarrassing. In this information, we give some suggestions and tips that might help you manage these symptoms.

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### Key facts about bloating and wind

- Bloating is a feeling of fullness, pressure or trapped wind in your tummy. Wind is gas inside your gut.
- Bloating and wind can develop for lots of different reasons.
- There are lots of things you can try to help relieve bloating and wind.
- Some people find it helps to eat several small meals a day instead of fewer large meals.
- You could try to work out if any foods make your symptoms worse.
- It can help to drink plenty of fluid and take regular, gentle exercise.



## What are bloating and wind?

Bloating is a feeling of fullness, pressure or trapped wind in your tummy. Your tummy might also get bigger. But you can feel bloated even if your tummy does not get bigger.

Wind is gas inside your gut. You get rid of it from your body when you fart (flatus) or burp (belching). It is a normal process, but we know it can be embarrassing.

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## Causes of bloating and wind

It is normal to have gas in your gut whether you have Crohn's or Colitis or not. Everyone produces several litres of gas a day through the normal processes of digestion. But only around 200ml (a bit less than a cupful) usually stays in your gut.

- Some gas is absorbed into your bloodstream. Your body reuses this or gets rid of it when you breath out.
- The rest of the gas is released when you burp or fart. Most people fart up to 25 times a day. Sometimes you might not even be aware you're doing it.

Wind is normal and is not necessarily a bad thing, but it can cause problems for some people.

Bloating and wind can be caused by lots of things, including medical conditions like [coeliac disease](#). But they commonly affect people with Crohn's or Colitis. They can develop for lots of reasons, including:

- **Problems digesting or absorbing certain foods:** Your body may not absorb or digest sugars or starchy foods well. This means they pass into your large bowel, where bacteria can feed on them and produce gas.
- **Changes in the balance of bacteria in your gut:** This can lead to more gas production.
- **Constipation:** This can slow the movement of food through your gut and may stop gas escaping.



- **Gut sensitivity:** Your gut may be more sensitive than usual to gas or other bowel contents.
- **Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS):** Bloating is a common symptom of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). More than 3 in 10 people with Crohn's or Colitis also have IBS, or IBS-like symptoms. This is why you might have gut symptoms even if your Crohn's or Colitis is under control (in remission).
- **Lactose intolerance:** Lactose is a sugar found in dairy products, like milk, cream and cheese. People with lactose intolerance do not digest lactose properly. Instead, it is fermented by the gas-producing bacteria in your large bowel. People with Crohn's may be slightly more likely to have lactose intolerance than people with Colitis or the general population. Some people with Crohn's or Colitis only get symptoms of lactose intolerance during a flare-up.
- **Complications of Crohn's or Colitis:** Bloating can also be due to complications of Crohn's or Colitis, like scar tissue from surgery. Rarely, it can be a sign of a more serious condition such as toxic megacolon. This can happen if you have severe and widespread inflammation in your large bowel. The bowel wall becomes thin and the large bowel can become bloated with gas. Symptoms include a high fever with pain and tenderness in the tummy. It needs to be treated urgently.

**If you have bloating with high fever, pain and tenderness in your tummy, get medical help straight away.**

- **Other causes:** Your tummy muscles might react unusually to gas in your gut. This can squash the space inside your abdomen and make your tummy stick out instead. Or you might swallow too much air. Everyone swallows air when they eat, drink or talk. Some people swallow more air than others. This is sometimes due to a nervous reaction. You swallow more air if you smoke or chew gum.



## Things you can do to help your symptoms

**Having my main meal at lunchtime, and avoiding eating after 6pm, helps to reduce any bloating and wind. If I do go out for dinner in the evening, I tend to just have a starter or something light.**

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### Lucy

Living with Crohn's

Unfortunately, there is no simple solution – what works for one person may not work for another. But some people have found the following suggestions helpful.

### Think about the way you eat

- Try to create a relaxed environment when you eat. Stress can affect how your body digests food.
- Eating slowly with your mouth closed and chewing each mouthful thoroughly helps reduce the amount of air you swallow with your food.
- You could try eating several small meals a day instead of fewer large meals. Some people say this makes them feel less bloated.
- Some people find that eating a large meal late at night makes them feel uncomfortable. If this is the case for you, try to leave longer between eating and going to bed.

**I don't get as bloated if I eat small, regular meals, around six times a day, rather than larger meals less often.**

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### Jake

Living with Crohn's



## Work out if any foods make your symptoms worse

Some people find that certain foods make bloating or wind worse. You could use a [food diary](#) or app to help find out if this is the case for you. Make a note of everything you eat and any symptoms you have to see if you notice any patterns.

**I find high fat and high sugar foods make tummy gurgles and wind worse for me so I try to avoid them.**

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**Marie-Gaelle**

Living with Colitis

Foods that produce a lot of wind vary from person to person. Some people find that the following foods affect them:

- Foods that contain starches that can be difficult to digest, like onions, leeks, lentils, cabbages, brussels sprouts, asparagus and beans.
- Wheat products like breads, breakfast cereals, pasta, cakes and pastries. Some people use wheat alternatives instead, like rye, corn, oat or rice products. But there is not much evidence to know whether or not this is helpful for people with Crohn's or Colitis.
- Sugary foods, especially foods that contain a sugar called sorbitol. This is found naturally in some fruits. It's also used as an artificial sweetener.
- Fatty foods. You could try lower-fat options, or baked or grilled foods instead of fried.
- Dairy products like milk, cheese or yoghurts. If dairy makes your symptoms worse, you could try non-dairy alternatives like soy, oat, rice or nut milks – but try to choose products with added calcium.
- Spicy foods.
- Foods high in bran fibre, like brown bread and some cereals. But, unless you have a stricture, there is no need to limit fibre in general. You could try foods high in soluble fibre instead, like ispaghula or linseed. These can actually help symptoms.



If you find any possible trigger foods, it's a good idea to discuss them with your IBD team before making any big changes to your diet.

They can check that you won't be missing out on nutrients that your body needs. They may be able to refer you to a dietitian.

If you do try cutting down on trigger foods, it may take a few weeks to notice any difference. It's important to get back to eating a healthy, balanced diet when you start to feel better.

## **If you think you have lactose intolerance**

If you think you may have lactose intolerance, talk to your IBD team. They can arrange tests, and advise you on the best way to manage your symptoms.

If you have Crohn's or Colitis and you also have lactose intolerance, cutting down on foods and drinks that contain lactose might help reduce bloating and wind. You could choose dairy alternatives with added calcium or look for lactose-free dairy products. Check the ingredients on foods you buy to see if they contain lactose.

Find out more in our information on [Food](#).

## **If you have IBS**

If you have irritable bowel symptoms as well as Crohn's or Colitis, a low FODMAP diet might help reduce bloating and wind. But there is not enough high-quality evidence to know for sure if it's effective.

FODMAP stands for Fermentable Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides and Polyols. These are carbohydrates that are hard to digest. When the undigested carbohydrates pass through your gut, they feed bacteria in your large bowel, which release gas. This can lead to bloating and wind.



A low FODMAP diet is restrictive and is not designed to be followed long-term. If you follow a low FODMAP diet, you should be supervised by a trained dietitian.

We have more detail on a low FODMAP diet in our information on [Food](#).

## Drinking

Drink plenty – around 6 to 8 cups or glasses of fluid a day.

You might also find it helpful to:

- Limit the caffeine you have in coffee, tea, cola or other drinks. You could try decaffeinated drinks, peppermint tea, green tea, or herbal and fruit teas instead.
- Avoid fizzy drinks because they contain gas.
- Drink slowly instead of gulping down large amounts. Some people with Crohn's or Colitis say that drinking a lot in one go makes them gassy, particularly if they drink it at mealtimes. If this is the case for you, it might help to take sips rather than large gulps of liquid.
- Limit your alcohol intake.

**I have reduced my caffeine and alcohol consumption and I drink more live yoghurt drinks. I think all of these changes have helped reduce bloating and gas for me.**

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**Kate**

Living with Colitis



## Other tips

- Some people find that moving around, sitting or lying in different positions helps their symptoms. Gas moves through your gut faster when you're sitting up or standing, rather than lying down. When you are in bed, you could try lying in different positions to see if any feel more comfortable.
- Try to take regular gentle exercise to help gas move through your gut. Some people find a short walk after a meal helps.
- If your lifestyle is not very active, increasing your physical activity might help your symptoms. For example, if you sit for a long time at work, try to take regular breaks to move around.
- Wear clothes that aren't too tight around your waist, because these can increase the pressure on your tummy.
- Stress can affect your digestive system. If you experience stress, try to find ways to help you manage it. For example, you could try mindfulness or breathing techniques. There are lots of apps you can use to help. You might also find our information on [Mental health and wellbeing](#) helpful.
- If you're not able to control when you fart, you might find it useful to look at our information on [Bowel incontinence](#).

**If you feel uncomfortable passing wind in the shared toilets, then don't hesitate to go to the disabled toilets. I always feel more comfortable in a private cubicle.**

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**Anonymous**

Living with Colitis

## Herbal therapies, medicines and supplements

Some people use herbal therapies or medicines you can buy yourself to help with bloating and wind. But there is generally not much evidence to support these.





You should tell your IBD team if you are taking any herbal remedies or medicines that you have bought yourself. They can sometimes interact with prescribed medicines.

## **I feel less bloated after exercise, and drinking peppermint tea helps too.**

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### **Rachel**

#### Living with Colitis

- Peppermint can improve symptoms like bloating and wind in people with IBS. But there is no evidence to know if it has the same effect for people with Crohn's or Colitis. You can buy it from pharmacies, supermarkets or online. Different brands are available as capsules or liquid medicine.
- Some people find that a medicine called simeticone helps with bloating and wind. You can buy it from pharmacies, supermarkets or online. Different brands are available as tablets, capsules or liquid medicine. Simeticone helps gas bubbles pass more easily through your gut. It does not get absorbed into your bloodstream.
- Some people say herbal remedies like chamomile, fennel or peppermint help reduce wind. But there is no high-quality evidence to know whether they work in people with Crohn's or Colitis.
- Some people with IBS find that probiotics help their symptoms. Probiotics are foods or supplements containing friendly bacteria. You can buy them as drinks, yoghurts, tablets or powders. Fermented foods like kefir, kimchi, tempeh and kombucha are also probiotic. There is no high-quality evidence that they reduce bloating or wind for people with Crohn's or Colitis. But, alongside prescribed medicines, they might help some people with mildly active Ulcerative Colitis get the condition under control. Some people get bloating as a side effect. If you're thinking of taking probiotics, it's a good idea to speak to your IBD team.



## Getting rid of smells

We're often a lot more sensitive to our own smells than other people are. But if you're worried about smells, you could try:

- Making sure the room you're in is well-ventilated.
- Lighting a scented candle, wax melt, aromatherapy oil burner or incense stick.
- Using an air freshener. You could use a solid block freshener that works all the time, or a freshener that releases a fragrance at regular intervals.
- Using neutralising sprays or gels to help get rid of smells. You can get these from pharmacies, supermarkets or online.
- Wearing underwear or pads that absorb smells. These are made using activated carbon fabrics that filter and trap gases. You can also get odour-absorbing bedding, cushions and other products. They're available to buy online. Try searching 'odour filtering clothes'.

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## Help and support from Crohn's & Colitis UK

We're here for you whenever you need us. Our award-winning information on Crohn's Disease, Ulcerative Colitis, and other forms of Inflammatory Bowel Disease have the information you need to help you manage your condition.

We have information on a wide range of topics, from individual medicines to coping with symptoms and concerns about relationships and employment. We'll help you find answers, access support and take control.

All information is available on our website: [crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/information](https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/information)

Our Helpline is a confidential service providing information and support to anyone affected by Crohn's or Colitis.



Our team can:

- Help you understand more about Crohn's and Colitis, diagnosis and treatment options
- Provide information to help you live well with your condition
- Help you understand and access disability benefits
- Be there to listen if you need someone to talk to
- Help you to find support from others living with the condition

Call us on 0300 222 5700 or email [helpline@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk](mailto:helpline@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk).

See our website for LiveChat: [crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/livechat](https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/livechat).

## **Crohn's & Colitis UK Forum**

This closed-group community on Facebook is for everyone affected by Crohn's or Colitis. You can share your experiences and receive support from others at:

[facebook.com/groups/CCUKforum](https://facebook.com/groups/CCUKforum).

## **Help with toilet access when out**

Members of Crohn's & Colitis UK get benefits including a Can't Wait Card and a RADAR key to unlock accessible toilets. This card shows that you have a medical condition, and will help when you need urgent access to the toilet when you are out. See [crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/membership](https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/membership) for more information, or call the Membership Team on 01727 734465.

Crohn's & Colitis UK information is research-based and produced with patients, medical advisers and other professionals. They are prepared as general information and are not intended to replace advice from your own doctor or other professional. We do not endorse any products mentioned.

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## **About Crohn's & Colitis UK**

We are Crohn's & Colitis UK, a national charity fighting for improved lives today – and a world free from Crohn's and Colitis tomorrow. To improve diagnosis and treatment, and



to fund research into a cure; to raise awareness and to give people hope, comfort and confidence to live freer, fuller lives. We're here for everyone affected by Crohn's and Colitis.

This information is available for free thanks to the generosity of our supporters and members. Find out how you can join the fight against Crohn's and Colitis: call **01727 734465** or visit [crohnsandcolitis.org.uk](https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk).

## About our information

Crohn's & Colitis UK information is research-based and produced with patients, medical advisers and other professionals. They are prepared as general information and are not intended to replace advice from your own doctor or other professional. We do not endorse any products mentioned.

We hope that you've found this information helpful. You can email the Knowledge and Information Team at [evidence@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk](mailto:evidence@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk) if:

- You have any comments or suggestions for improvements
- You would like more information about the research on which the information is based
- You would like details of any conflicts of interest

You can also write to us at **Crohn's & Colitis UK, 1 Bishops Square, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9NE** or contact us through the **Helpline: 0300 222 5700**.

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