



# Bloated belly

Bloating is usually caused by too much food or air and gas getting trapped in the intestines. But some people get bloated even when they didn't eat too much. In some cases, it can be downright painful. The best way to address painful bloating is to find the cause and know how you can treat it.



## BLOATING CULPRITS

The most common causes include:

- **Dairy foods.** If you notice bloating after eating cheese, ice cream, or drinking milk, you could have lactose intolerance.
- **Gum.** Swallowing air while chewing can cause bloating.
- **Eating too much fiber at once.** Fiber is great for you, but if your body isn't used to it, you can get bloated and uncomfortable. Increase the amount you eat gradually.
- **Bowel problems.** Being constipated or having irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can cause painful bloating. Also, having small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO) can cause bloating.
- **Menstrual cycles.** Some women get bloated because their body holds extra water before or during their periods.



## TREAT BLOATING AT HOME

- Write down what you eat and drink. Record when you get stomach pain or bloating.
- Cut back on gum and avoid carbonated drinks.
- Drink plenty of water to keep the bowels moving. Don't use a straw when drinking.
- Eat enough fiber. Start with fruits and vegetables. Add fiber to your diet slowly, by 2 to 3 grams a day.
- Avoid or limit sugar-free foods or foods that contain sugar alcohols.
- Avoid dairy and/or gluten-containing foods. Or, try a low fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, and polyols (FODMAP) diet to avoid carbohydrates that are hard to digest.
- Over-the-counter anti-gas medicines with simethicone help remove gas from the body.



## WHEN TO SEE YOUR DOCTOR

Call a doctor or seek immediate medical care if you notice bloating with:

- Blood with bowel movements (stool)
- Losing weight without making an effort
- Nausea or vomiting
- For women: menstrual bleeding between periods or after menopause
- Fever
- Severe pain that won't go away

These could be signs of a serious health issue that needs treatment.

