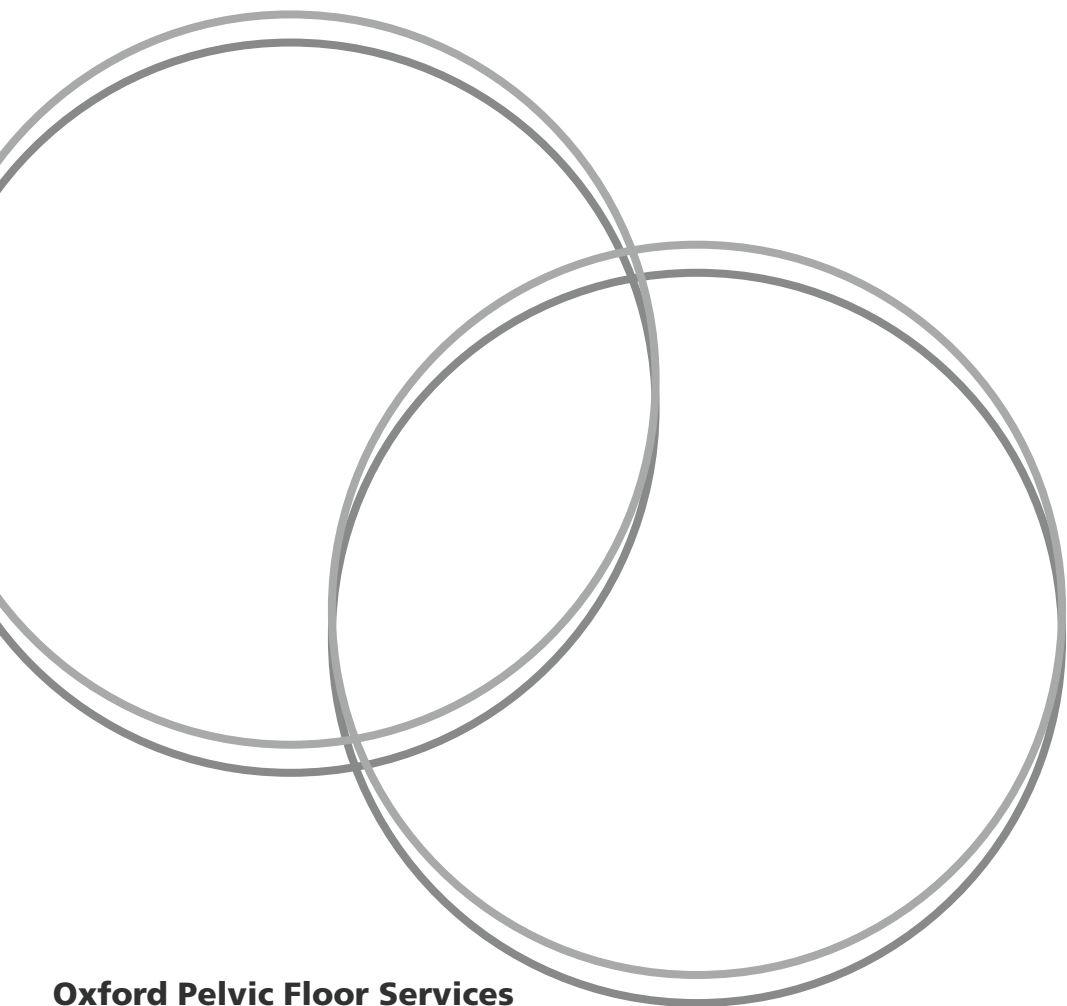


Tips on controlling wind and smells

Information for patients



*"I sat next to the Duchess at tea
It was just as I thought it would be.
Her rumblings abdominal
Were simply phenomenal,
And everyone thought it was me!!"*

– Woodrow Wilson

Having a bowel problem can sometimes mean that you cannot reliably control the release of wind (flatus) or gas from your back passage, or that any wind you do pass seems to smell offensive. This in turn can lead to feelings of embarrassment.

Wind or 'flatus' is made up of hydrogen, carbon dioxide, nitrogen and sometimes methane (this is the smelly ingredient). Two thirds of flatus passed is formed by bacteria, which causes fermentation in your bowel, the rest is made up of air that is swallowed as you eat.

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

There is no one simple solution to this but here are a few things that you might like to try.

- Try to eat much more slowly to make sure that you are not swallowing as much air.
- Gently massaging your abdomen may help you to pass wind when you are on the toilet.
- Fizzy carbonated drinks may increase air intake; usually you will burp this up but a few people seem to experience more wind with these drinks. Excess alcohol is likely to cause more wind than usual the next day.
- Drinking with your meal may increase the amount of air that you swallow, so try drinking before or after a meal rather than with it.
- Eating little and often, rather than one huge meal a day can make it easier for your intestines to cope. This can help to decrease wind production. Eating regularly can help, as an empty bowel produces more wind and gurgles.
- Take care with hot spicy food, especially if you are not used to it, as this can increase the speed with which food travels through your bowel and cause you to produce more wind.

Foods which may increase wind

The following list shows examples of food that may increase wind. You may find that something not on this list is windy for you.

- Beans (including baked beans and kidney beans)
- Eggs
- Lentils, pulses and seeds (i.e. fennel, poppy and sunflower)
- Shellfish
- Nuts (especially peanuts)
- Milk and milk products
- Salad (especially cucumber)
- Bran cereal or other high bran foods
- Jacket potato skins
- Brown rice or wholemeal pasta
- Leeks, swede, parsnips, turnips, cabbage, cauliflower, carrots and broccoli
- Onion and garlic.

This does not mean that you should make your life difficult or miserable by having to think about everything that you eat, or not eating foods that you particularly enjoy.

Do try to eat a balanced diet, and see if any of the above foods makes a difference for you. This will help you to make a choice about when or how much of a food to eat.

Tips for controlling or disguising smells

If you are troubled by leakage from your bowel, good personal hygiene will be important in avoiding smells. If this is a problem, please ask for some advice on skin care.

Doing pelvic floor muscle exercises to improve strength and speed of reaction can help to improve control of wind.

If you are producing a lot of wind that you cannot control, or if you have faecal incontinence, some of these ideas may help:

- Try to ensure good ventilation of the room you are in, such as keeping a small window open.
- Use an aromatherapy oil burner, scented candles, incense sticks or a dish of pot pourri (renew this regularly, as the scent wears off).
- Use aerosol air fresheners with care – some smell very obvious, and may even be worse than the smell you are trying to disguise!
- There are many solid block air fresheners that release a subtle scent all the time.
- Try striking a match and then blowing it out immediately, allowing the small plume of smoke to drift into the room.
- Toilet bowl odour eliminator sprays.

Products and foods which you may find helpful for winds or smells

There is no scientific research on this so we cannot actually recommend any food or product, but these are some recommendations from people who have found certain things helpful:

- Probiotics such as Biokult, acidophilus tablets
- Peppermint oil capsules
- Fennel or peppermint tea
- Pineapple capsules (bromelain capsules)
- Live natural yoghurt or lactobacillus drink (e.g. 'Yakult')
- Charcoal tablets
- Aloe Vera capsules or drink
- Charcoal lined underwear.

Your pharmacist may stock or be able to give you advice on deodorants and neutralisers specifically to control smells from faeces or urine.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or need advice please contact us, either by telephone or email.

Telephone: **01865 235 881**

Email: **pelvicfloor.advice@ouh.nhs.uk**

The Pelvic Floor Society patient information leaflets

Website: **www.thepelvicfloorsociety.co.uk**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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