



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Reducing wind and bloating during radiotherapy treatment

Information for patients



The Radiotherapy Department

It is normal to produce wind or gas (flatulence) as part of digestion. Excessive gas can sometimes affect the shape of your large bowel. If you are having radiotherapy to the pelvic area, large amounts of gas in the bowel can affect the area being treated. This information leaflet gives you some suggestions on how you may be able to reduce gas in your bowel through temporary diet and lifestyle changes. You may only need to make a few changes to your diet or lifestyle for the duration of radiotherapy treatment. In some situations, changing your diet may not have any impact on the amount of gas in your bowel and you should not worry if this is the case. Please remember that these are **temporary changes to your diet** whilst you are on treatment. Once you have finished treatment you can return back to your normal diet.

Helpful hints on reducing gas in the bowel

Lifestyle

- Chew food slowly and thoroughly
- Avoid talking too much when eating as this may make you swallow more air and increase wind & bloating
- Avoid chewing gum
- Try to be as active as you can each day to encourage bowel movement

Drinks

- Ensure you drink enough fluid. You should aim for 8-10 cups or 2L of fluid a day and this includes any types of drinks
- Allow hot drinks to cool down
- Sip drinks slowly
- Try not to drink large amounts with meals
- Try not use straws or gulp large amounts in one go
- Avoid fizzy drinks e.g. carbonated drinks such cola, lemonade, sparkling water and alcohol (beer/larger/sparkling wine)
 - Try still varieties instead or allow fizzy drink to go 'flat'
- Reduce caffeinated drinks (e.g. tea, coffee, cola, energy drinks such as Red Bull™)
 - Keep caffeinated drinks to a maximum of 3 cups or 2 mugs per day.
 - Choose decaffeinated drinks
 - Water or herbal teas are good alternatives.

Food

- Avoid certain foods or drinks that you already know make you more windy than normal
- Avoid skipping meals and try to space out your meals throughout the day instead
- Try to limit eating foods that can increase wind & bloating such as;
 - Beans & pulses
 - Certain vegetables such as cabbage, brussel sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, onions, leeks, mushrooms, peas and sweetcorn
 - Dried fruit or excessive fruit (which is more than 5 portions a day)
 - Large amounts of artificial sweeteners e.g. sugar free sweets and chewing gum
- Cut down on rich or fatty foods like chips, fast foods, pies, batter, cheese, pizza, creamy sauces, snacks such as; crisps, chocolate, cake and biscuits, butter, spreads, cooking oils, and fatty meats such as burgers and sausages
- Reduce your intake of processed foods and cook from fresh ingredients where possible
- Some herbs and spices such as peppermint and ginger may help you digest food and reduce wind
- You may find it helpful to include oats in your diet, such as oat based cereals or porridge oats.

Probiotics

Probiotic supplements, yoghurts or fermented milk drinks (e.g. Yakult™ or Actimel™) may help reduce your symptoms of wind and bloating. If you decide to take these, we would recommend taking them daily for at least four weeks to see if they improve symptoms. If they do not appear to help then you could try an alternative brand. **If you are on chemotherapy you will be advised to avoid probiotic drinks for the duration of chemotherapy due to possible infection risk.**

If you require further advice on nutrition, please ask to be referred to the dietitian.

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.



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