

Q. What can I do to prevent excessive gas and acid reflux? Are there certain foods I should avoid?

A. Various foods seem to cause problems for some people but not others, so you will need to do some experimenting to see what foods agree best with you. That being said, here are some general principles to follow.

Try being more active. Walking stimulates the gut and shortens the time it takes for food to transit through the intestine. Very active people may cut their transit time in half, thus giving less time for gas formation and problems. A good walk in the open air is a good way to relieve gas problems too.

Foods that seem to cause more problems with gas are the high-fiber foods – beans, cabbage-family foods, etc. Fiber is not absorbed by the body and passes on through the gut. In the lower bowel, the fiber is acted on by bacteria to produce gas. A certain amount of gas is normal and desirable for normal bowel function. High-fiber foods also lower your risk of diabetes and help you maintain a healthy weight, so you don't want to eliminate them.

When eating beans and other high-fiber foods, you can add Beano® at the time you eat them. Beano helps you better digest certain carbohydrates in the beans that cause the gas. Making sure your foods are well cooked also helps you digest them easier. Cooking beans in a pressure cooker (or using canned beans), for example, helps you digest them better and it causes less gas than beans cooked on the stove top.



Milk can cause gas problems in people who lack the enzyme to digest the sugar (lactose) in milk.

The undigested sugar in the gut causes gas. If this is a problem for you, try yogurt. The lactose sugar in yogurt has been changed to lactic acid and it can be digested fine without the lactase enzyme.

Cabbage and broccoli are a problem for some people. Be sure it is well cooked. If it still causes problems, simply eat smaller amounts or eat other healthy greens.

Gastric reflux is another problem that may or may not be associated with gas problems.

Nutritionists used to think that certain foods were responsible and they provided a long list of foods to avoid. More recent research found this was not helpful, but here are some principles.

- If you always notice one specific food bothers you, avoid it.
- When eating, allow 4-5 hours between meals. Frequent eating contributes to upset stomachs and reflux.
- Eat smaller meals and less high-fat foods. It helps your meal digest more quickly.
- After eating, don't lie down for 2-4 hours. Keeping moderately active aids digestion and helps prevent reflux.
- If you have reflux and you can't sleep, prop up the head of your bed 4-6 inches. This helps relieve symptoms so you can sleep better.
- If it persists, see your doctor. There may be a medical reason that can be treated and there are medications that can help.

