

Belching or Eructation

Why do I belch excessively?

Eructation, or “belching,” is considered “the voiding of gas or small quantity of acid fluid from the stomach through the mouth.” *Aerophagia* is the act of swallowing air, which can cause you to belch. You may swallow large amounts of air with your food, especially if you eat or drink quickly. Some people have a nervous habit of swallowing air all day, especially in times of stress. Swallowing air significantly increases with anxiety. Often, aerophagia is a learned process of sucking air into the esophagus (foodpipe) while breathing, but is done subconsciously. If you are in an upright position, swallowed air may pass back up from your stomach and be released through your mouth in a belch. However, each time you belch, you swallow more air, so the belching is likely to continue. When you lie down, the air may instead pass through the intestines and rectum, and out the anus.

How do I treat excessive belching?

- Work on stress reduction via relaxation techniques and exercises.
- Practice open-mouth, diaphragmatic breathing.
- Eat and drink more slowly, so you swallow less air with food; chew food longer and sip liquids slowly.
- Avoid frequent sighing.
- Change your diet; avoid foods that are known to cause excessive gas, such as mint, onion, chocolate (*see list in next column*).

- Avoid carbonated beverages, such as soda, sparkling juice or water, and beer.
- Avoid chewing gum – it increases the amount of air you swallow.
- Avoid smoking – this also increases air swallowed.
- Talk to your doctor about nonprescription medicines, such as antacids with simethicone and activated charcoal, which may help to reduce your symptoms.
- Ask your doctor about trying digestive enzymes, such as lactase supplements, which can help digest carbohydrates and may allow you to eat foods that normally cause gas.

Foods that may cause excessive gas

- Dairy products (except yogurt)
- Vegetables, such as brown beans, cauliflower, peas, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, mushrooms, tomatoes and onions
- Bran and whole grains
- Fruits such as pears, apples and peaches
- Carbonated beverages
- Dried fruits
- Sugar substitutes in sugar-free foods and candies (i.e., sorbitol)
- Mint
- Chocolate

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.