

# Managing Gas and Bloating with Nutrition During Radiation Treatment

Gas is a normal part of digestion. But too much gas can cause you discomfort and pain. Gas also causes problems during radiation treatments.

Your appointments may be much longer if you need to get rid of gas before treatment begins. It's important to reduce gas and bloating throughout **all** of your radiation treatments. Here are some tips to help you.

## What can I do to reduce gas and bloating?

### Swallow less air when eating and drinking

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aim for 5 or 6 small meals per day, or eat every 2 to 3 hours</li><li>• Eat slowly and chew your food well</li><li>• Choose a relaxed place to eat</li><li>• Don't talk too much while you eat</li><li>• Avoid chewing gum and sucking on hard candies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sip fluids between meals, not with meals</li><li>• Use a glass instead of a bottle</li><li>• Have less carbonated drinks like pop, soda, sparkling water, and beer</li><li>• Skip the foam on your coffee</li><li>• Don't use a straw or slurp from a spoon</li></ul>

If you still have problems with gas and bloating, you can try a product with “simethicone” such as Gas-X®. This helps to break down gas bubbles in your gut.

### Have regular bowel movements (poops)

Constipation can cause gas. Try these things to make sure you have at least 1 poop each day:

- **Get active** — Take a walk, do some housework, or stand more than you sit. This helps food move through your gut.
- **Eat more fibre** — Start with a little at first, so your body can get used to it. Try fibre rich foods like oatmeal, banana, and ground flaxseeds.
- **Drink between meals** — Water, milk, milk alternatives (non-dairy), broth, or sports drinks like Gatorade® are good choices. Talk to your doctor if you have been told to limit or restrict fluids.

If you are constipated from using pain medication, speak with your healthcare team about a stool softener or laxative.

**Tip!**

Cook foods until very soft. This makes them easier to digest.

## Are there foods I should avoid?

### ✔ Limit foods with a sugar-free label

Sugar-free foods have fake sweeteners called sugar alcohols. These do not absorb in the gut and give some people gas. Sugar alcohols are in sugar-free chewing gums and candies. Check the ingredient list for:

•mannitol •sorbitol •xylitol



### ✔ Reduce gas-forming foods

Below is a list of foods that can cause gas. You may not have a problem with all these foods if you eat lots of fibre already. Just avoid the foods that give you gas.

- Apples and apple juice
- Peaches
- Pears and pear juice
- Whole grain bread
- Some vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and bok choy
- Onions and garlic
- Legumes, like black beans, chickpeas, lentils, and kidney beans
- Artichokes
- Lettuce
- Bran
- Sprouts
- Asparagus
- Prunes

**Tip!**

Choose canned beans and legumes. Drain and rinse them well before eating.

## What about dairy products?

Dairy products do not cause problems for everyone.

If eating dairy does not make you bloat or give you gas, you can go ahead and have it.

If you get gas, bloating, or diarrhea 30 to 60 minutes after you eat or drink dairy, you may be lactose intolerant. That means you can't digest dairy. If this happens, it's best to limit or avoid dairy products.

If you think you may be lactose intolerant, try a nutrition drink instead, like Ensure®.

## How long should I follow this advice?

Follow this nutrition guide while you are in radiation treatment. When your treatment is done, you can go back to eating the way you used to. If you cut out foods that gave you gas or bloating while in treatment, go slow when you start to eat those foods again. Try to add back one food at a time. If it doesn't give you gas, bloating, or pain, it will be safe to keep eating that food.

If you aren't able to eat much at all, talk to your cancer care team. They can refer you to a registered dietitian.

[www.cancercarealberta.ca](http://www.cancercarealberta.ca)

