

How Do You Treat Intestinal Gas?

By Andrew Gaeddert, BA, AHG

It is natural to have gas in the colon. It is usually expelled during a bowel movement. However, some people have excessive amounts of gas, and are bothered by it throughout the day. Intestinal gas is primarily composed of oxygen; nitrogen; hydrogen; carbon dioxide; and methane.

Oxygen and nitrogen are found in the air we breathe, whereas the other gases are primarily the result of bacterial fermentation in the large intestine. Some foods that may cause excessive gas are beans; peas; wheat; oats; bran; Brussels sprouts; cabbage; corn; rutabaga; and dairy products. From a naturopathic point of view, excessive gas may be an indication of *candida* overgrowth. Candidiasis can be worsened by eating excessive amounts of fermented and yeast-containing foods, such as soy sauce; beer; bread; sugar; fruit juice; or fruit.

Intestinal gas can be aggravated when dietary fiber intake is increased. Sometimes it occurs when taking herbal remedies one is unaccustomed to. Eating too fast and chewing gum can contribute to gas, as well as swallowed air. Therefore, eat food slowly and chew thoroughly. Carbonated beverages and sugar substitutes can also contribute. In terms of Chinese medicine, gas is usually due to diet, stress, and spleen *qi* deficiency accompanied by dampness. Over-the-counter chemical remedies should not be taken to relieve or prevent gas because there is no strong evidence that they are effective.

Self-Help

- Chew a handful of caraway seeds.
- Peppermint tea may be taken several times per day.
- Use a digestive formula (consisting of poria; coix; *shen chu*; magnolia; angelica; pueraria; red atractylodes; jurinea; pogostemon; oryza; trichosanthes root; chrysanthemum; halloysite; citrus; and mentha; two tablets as needed) to help expel or reduce gas.

- Activated charcoal may be taken for the short term. Follow instructions carefully. Do not take at the same time as other medications.

Professional Treatment

The following treatments should be administered by herbalists as choosing the correct formula will greatly improve efficacy.

- A digestion formula, consisting of poria (*fu ling*); coix (*yi yi ren*); shen chu (*shen qu*); magnolia (*hou pu*); angelica (*bai zhi*); pueraria (*ge gen*); red atractylodes (*cang zhu*); saussurea (*mu xiang*); pogostemon (*huo xiang*); oryza (*gu ya*); trichosanthes root (*tian hua fen*); chrysanthemum (*ju hua*); halloysite (*chi shi zhi*); citrus (*ju hong*); and mentha (*bo he*). Use as needed for gas or take two tablets QID. This digestion formula may be combined with the formulas mentioned below.
- Anti-candida diets are often very effective. Anti-candida herbal formulas such as the following, consisting of phellodendron (*huang bai*); codonopsis (*dang shen*); atractylodes (*bai zhu*); anemarrhena (*zhi mu*); plantago (*che qian zi*); pulsatilla (*bai tou weng*); capillaris (*yin chen hao*); cnidium fruit (*she chuang zi*); houttuynia (*yu xing cao*); dioscorea (*shan yao*); licorice (*gan cao*); and cardamon (*sha ren*) are also effective. One to two tablets of this formula TID are helpful, particularly when combined with symptomatic formulas such as the digestion formula mentioned above.
- As mentioned above, Chinese medicine considers excessive gas due to weak spleen function. Thus, three tablets TID of a codonopsis formula such as the following, which is comprised of codonopsis; atractylodes; poria; baked licorice (*zhi gan cao*); citrus (*chen pi*); pinellia (*ban xia*); saussurea (*mu xiang*); and cardamon, may be combined with two tablets TID of the aforementioned digestion formula, particularly if the patient has a weak pulse and complains of fatigue.
- For cold signs, consider three tablets TID of a stomach formula, consisting of magnolia; citrus; pinellia; red atractylodes; ginger (*gan jiang*); licorice; bupleurum; and oryza.
- With stress, use three tablets TID of a formula comprised of bupleurum; pueraria; pinellia; cinnamon (*gui zhi*); peony (*bai shao*); ginseng (*ren shen*); scute (*huang qin*); licorice; and ginger.
- For PMS, use three tablets TID of a woman's formula, consisting of bupleurum; *tang kuei* (*dang gui*); white peony (*bai shao*); salvia (*dan shen*); poria; atractylodes; cyperus (*xiang fu*); citrus; moutan (*mu dan pi*); gardenia (*zhi zi*); ginger; and licorice.

Case Studies

Case #1: A female patient in her mid-30s complained of frequent intestinal gas, nausea, severe PMS, fatigue and low back pain. She usually had a glass or two of wine each night, and had a fondness for sweets. Traditional Chinese diagnosis revealed that her pulse was wiry, and her tongue was swollen, wet and red around the edges.

Before recommending any herbal formulas, I suggested she give up alcohol -- or have it only occasionally -- and instead, practice meditation after work. I also recommended cutting out sweets, as this would reduce both the PMS and intestinal gas. She was then given two tablets TID each of the woman's formula and digestion formula mentioned above, as well as adrenosen, to be taken symptomatically for fatigue. After two months she reported more energy and less gas, and the PMS was less severe. She still had lingering back pain. At this point, she discontinued the digestion formula, was given two tablets TID of a tonic consisting of astragalus root and seed (*huang qi* and *sha yuan ji zi*); ligustrum (*nu zhen zi*); hoshouwu (*he shou wu*); lycium fruit (*gou qi zi*); rehmannia (*shu di huang*); eucommia (*du zhong*); cuscuta (*tu si zi*); ginseng; *tang kuei*; and cornus (*shan zhu yu*) to tonify the body, and continued on the woman's formula.

Case #2: A male sales representative, 35, came to our clinic complaining of chronic gas, abdominal bloating and fatigue. He had already tried digestive enzymes and acidophilus. Traditional Chinese diagnosis found that his pulse was weak, and his tongue was wet. He was put on a combination of the digestion and codonopsis formulas mentioned above (two tablets QID of each formula). He was also counseled not to consume cold drinks or foods, and to decrease his intake of fatty and fried foods. Within two weeks, the gas was significantly reduced.

Case #3: A 27-year old male was diagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome. His main symptoms were bloating, loose stools, and excessive gas in the afternoon and evening. Traditional Chinese diagnosis revealed that his pulse was thin and wiry; his tongue had a thick grey coating. I suggested following a protein and vegetable based rotation diet. In addition, he was given two tablets of the anti-candida formula before each meal and two tablets BID of colostropex bovine colostrom. Within one month, nearly all symptoms had been reduced by 90 percent.

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