



Factsheet – Wind, Ballooning & Odour

Everyone's bowel generates wind. However, for ostomates wind may be more of a problem as it is not possible to control when it is expelled through the stoma. Passing wind can result in sudden noises, or the stoma bag may inflate, often referred to as ballooning. The bowel needs to settle down after surgery so more wind is produced in the early weeks after a stoma is formed. The amount and frequency of wind usually decreases with time and the noise will become less noticeable.

What causes wind?

The major factor is undoubtedly gas production as a result of the breakdown of food. In the stomach and small intestine food is broken down into the basic nutrients which are absorbed into the body, while the remainder passes into the colon as waste. Some foods contain resistant starch which can escape digestion and enter the colon where it is fermented by bacteria to produce gas.

How can I alter my diet to reduce wind?

Foods containing resistant starch include wholegrain seeds, sweet corn, muesli, green bananas, garlic and onions. Avoid eating too much of these foods.

Resistant starch can also be formed during the cooking process so cutting down on pre-cooked and ready-made meals containing potato, pasta or rice, and oven chips or other preheated potato products may help.

Other foods which may also cause wind include:

- Some vegetables, e.g. beans, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage.
- Sorbitol, which is found in some artificial sweeteners and sugar-free foods.

Everyone is different. Not all the foods listed above affect all ostomates. Keeping a diary of what you eat and when you experience wind may help to identify the foods most likely to affect you. Bear in mind that food may take a day or so to pass through the system.

What else can I do to reduce wind?

Cut down on beer and fizzy drinks.

Avoid chewing gum.

Eat regularly and avoid going for too long without food.

Eat slowly and chew your food well.

Some people find that taking the following will help:

- Live yoghurt or probiotic drinks.
- Peppermint oil capsules (obtained from the chemist or on prescription).



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What can I do if the bag keeps ballooning?

Almost all modern stoma appliances have a filter to deodorize and release wind produced by the stoma. However, the filters on some bags are more efficient than others, so it may be worthwhile trying a different appliance. See below for information on how to obtain samples.

Only use a filter cover (the sticky patches you find in the box of bags) when you are bathing, showering or swimming as this will stop the filter getting wet which can prevent it from working effectively. Leave it off at all other times to allow any wind to escape.

If the contents of the bag come into contact with the filter, this can prevent it from working effectively. If this happens replace the bag with a fresh one.

Some ostomates use a two-piece, clip-on bag and, while in the toilet, release wind by unclipping the bag from the flange. Others will release wind through the opening in a drainable bag.

A pouch (bag) venting system (Osto-Ez-Vent) is available. This is fitted to the bag above the filter and unclipped as necessary to release wind. However it cannot be obtained on prescription and currently costs £15.95 for a pack of ten. For free samples contact **Ostomart** on 0800 220 300.

What can I do about odour?

Some filters may be more effective deodorizers than others, so again it may be worthwhile trying different appliances. See below for information on how to obtain samples.

There are drops, gels, capsules and sachets which can neutralize any odour within the bag. These are available on prescription and can be introduced into a clean bag, before it is fitted in place. CA produces a factsheet on deodorants.

Would you like to talk to another ostomate?

We have a team of trained volunteers who are willing to talk about their own experiences on dealing with wind (and other subjects). Please call our 24 hour helpline if you would like to speak with a fellow ostomate about your concerns and we will be happy to match you with a suitable CA volunteer.

Obtaining Samples

To obtain samples of different appliances contact your delivery company, see advertisements in *Tidings* magazine, or contact CA head office for a list of manufacturers.