

## **Bloating (From the Food Doctor)**

### What are the causes?

1 in 10 visits to a UK GP relate to a digestive complaint and the most common digestive symptoms are pain and bloating. Many patients simply go home with a diagnosis of IBS and are none the wiser as to why their symptoms continue to be expressed. So in this article we shed a little light on the factors that we consider to be relevant to this condition.

Abdominal bloating is when the abdomen feels full and tight, it is usually caused by intestinal gas, this can go hand in hand with flatulence and burping. This gas is produced by the bacteria in the digestive tract, bacteria generate gas from food that is eaten but is not been properly digested and absorbed.

Anyway that you look at it, this is no fun. Bloating on a regular basis can be indicative of underlying health issues and imbalances which, if left unchecked, can lead to more serious health problems in later years. If you get bloating you are receiving an early warning signal that all is not well and need to do something about it.

### Bloating relates to a number of possible digestive imbalances

If one of our clients says they are experiencing bloating, pain or wind then we consider this to be a sign that there may be one of several digestive factors out of balance. The underlying causes of this are numerous and include: low stomach acid, low digestive enzymes, stress, food intolerances, poor gut motility and gut dysbiosis. By asking our clients questions about there lifestyle and diet we can get a more detailed idea as to why they are experiencing digestive imbalance and start to formulate a pro-active plan to help relieve them of their symptoms.

### Low stomach acid

The symptoms of low stomach acid are very common and include burping when eating and feeling very full after eating very little. Stomach acid is important because it is where protein digestion begins; it also important because it stimulates the release of other digestive enzymes essential for the digestion of other types of foods. With low stomach acid you can find it more difficult to digest things like eggs, fish and meat. As a result only partially digested protein molecules, instead of fully digested end products of protein digestion, make their way into the lower bowel where they cause digestive irritation, inflammation and putrefaction which creates pain and bloating.

### Food Doctor tips to improve stomach acid

- take time away from your desk to eat
- don't eat on the move
- relax for 5-10 minutes before you start to eat
- smell your food before you tuck in and chew your food thoroughly
- don't get into the habit of bolting your food down

### Low digestive enzymes

Digestive enzymes are produced by the cells that line your stomach and small intestine and by your pancreas. These enzymes work on all food groups - protein, fats and carbohydrates.

Factors such as stress and intestinal inflammation caused by infection or food intolerances result in lower levels of digestive enzymes being produced. The consequences of this are just the same as those for low stomach acid but include undigested particles of carbohydrates and fats as well as proteins entering the lower bowel. Again irritation, inflammation and fermentation occur and the scene is set for further pain and bloating.

#### Food Doctor tips to improve digestive enzymes

- follow all of the tips for improving low stomach acid plus
- avoid raw food for at least 1-2 months replace salads with soups and stews which literally gives your digestive system a holiday and a chance to replenish digestive enzyme levels.
- take a digestive enzyme supplement half way through each meal this helps complete digestion and reduce bloating and pain

#### Food intolerances

Food intolerances are quite different to food allergies. Symptoms of a food allergy are very severe and happen almost immediately after eating any amount – even a tiny trace amount of your allergenic food. Food intolerances display a much more subtle response and symptoms can develop over a 48 hour period. It is common to develop intolerances to the foods you love the most and eat on a daily or regular basis. Food intolerances can be caused by low stomach acid, low digestive enzymes, stress or simply eating the same foods on a very regular basis.

#### UK Top 10 Food Intolerances

Gluten, Wheat, Dairy , Yeast, Shellfish, Egg, Peanuts, Sesame seeds, Soya, Chocolate

Digestive symptoms typical of food intolerances include bloating, loose stool, diarrhoea and/or constipation but symptoms outside of the digestive tract can also occur such as runny nose, headaches, low energy, dark circles under the eyes or mood swings can also become apparent. In the long-term food intolerances can cause a condition called leaky gut where tiny holes appear along the intestine tract due to the inflammation that food intolerances cause. These holes allow undigested food particles and toxins to cross from the intestine into the blood stream which creates a high level of body toxicity. It is this toxicity that often triggers the on going low immunity and fatigue which can be experienced with long running multiple food intolerances.

#### Food Doctor tips to avoid food intolerances

- keep a food diary for 2 weeks to see how much wheat, dairy and other Top 10 food intolerance foods you actually eat on a daily basis
- remove the food group that you repeatedly eat the most of for at least 3-4 weeks and see how much of an impact this has on your symptoms
- add more variety to your daily diet, don't eat the same foods day in day out
- supplement with Slippery Elm Plus a combination of herbs and nutrients designed to heal the intestine wall and reduce inflammation.

## Dysbiosis

Your large intestine plays host to thousands of micro-organisms some of which are beneficial and actually help to keep colon cells protected from disease and decay and others which are potentially harmful like yeasts, parasites and some not so friendly bacteria which can actually harm colon cells and create bowel toxicity. A healthy colon is one that is populated with strong healthy numbers of good or 'Probiotic' bacteria. If your levels of probiotics have taken a tumble and the not so healthy bugs have been able to become more established then you are likely to experience wind and bloating after eating.

### Food Doctor tips to restore good bacteria

- eat natural bio-yoghurt 3-4 times a week
- cut back on sugar rich foods which encourage the overgrowth of bad bacteria, yeasts and parasites
- drink filtered water when on holiday
- supplement with a good Probiotic daily, choose one which contains at least 4 billion acidophilus per capsule and remember to keep these in the fridge

### Poor gut motility

Having poor gut motility sets the scene for a stagnant bowel and this means that levels of probiotics start to decline whilst the not so friendly bugs start to flourish. Vast amounts of toxins are produced as these bugs set to work on the end products of digestion and this can result in damage to colon cells and an increased risk of colon cancer. Bloating, pain and constipation predominate along with a feeling of general toxicity, frequent headaches and a coated tongue. Poor bowel motility can occur as a result of poor intestinal muscle function brought about by an imbalance between calcium and magnesium, lack of dietary soluble fibre or simply from being dehydrated.

### Food Doctor tips to improving gut motility

- increase the amount of water you drink to 2 litres a day, this hydrates your bowel and increases stool volume and softness
- increase your daily soluble fibre intake a day with fruits, vegetables, lentils, beans, oats and brown rice
- reduce eggs, bananas, cheese, bread and pasta which actively reduce gut motility
- increase magnesium rich foods which help to restore gut muscle function - green leafy vegetables, nuts and sunflower seeds. Keep a tub of Food Doctor Seeds at work for snacks.

## How to improve your digestion

Making dramatic changes to your diet can be difficult to do and even harder to sustain for any significant length of time. However, it doesn't take much to make a difference; why not start today with the following 5 simple changes that can help to improve your digestion:

- Add a tablespoon of sauerkraut as a side accompaniment to a salad as this is high in good probiotic bacteria
- Ginger, peppermint and fennel are valuable tools for reducing gas and can be added to food as herbs or drunk as herbal teas.
- Fruit can also cause bloating, particularly when eaten straight after a main meal. It is best to eat it separately, either 30 minutes before a meal or at least two hours after.
- Swap your usual fruit yoghurt for a natural, preferably organic, bio-yoghurt to boost your beneficial bacteria. Remember that the probiotic drinks are often high in sugar which is not good for bloating.
- Include fresh papaya or pawpaw (which contains papain) and fresh pineapple (which contains bromelain) in your diet. These are good sources of beneficial digestive enzymes.