

# Wind, ballooning and odour

Everyone's bowel generates wind, but for ostomates wind may be more of a problem as it is not possible to control when it is expelled. 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?

In the stomach and small intestine food is broken down into the basic nutrients which are absorbed into the body. The remainder passes into the colon as waste. Some foods contain resistant starch which can escape digestion and enter the colon where it ferments to produce gas.

## How can I alter my diet to reduce wind?

Avoid eating too much of foods that contain resistant starch. These include: wholegrain seeds, sweet corn, muesli, green bananas, garlic and onions.

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 cause wind include: beans, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage. Additionally, artificial sweeteners and sugar-free foods that contain sorbitol.

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 affect you most.

## 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. 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. If the filter gets wet, it may not work effectively. Leave the cover 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. It is available on prescription and available to buy. For free samples contact **Respond** 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. The Colostomy Association 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.

## Obtaining Samples

To obtain samples of different appliances contact your delivery company, see advertisements in *Tidings* magazine, or contact Colostomy UK head office for a list of manufacturers. The latter can also be downloaded as a factsheet: 'Supply Companies'.