

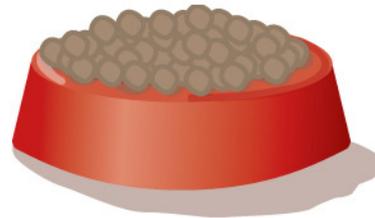
# FLATULENCE

## ***My dog has excessive gas. What is this called?***

The excessive formation of gas in the stomach or intestine is referred to as flatulence. Flatus is the medical term used to describe air or gas expelled through the anus. The term originates from the Latin *flatulentus* which means "a blowing".

## ***What causes flatulence in dogs?***

The most common cause is a change in diet or from the dog eating something new or spoiled (dietary indiscretion). Most cases of chronic flatulence are caused by a diet that is poorly digested by the dog. These poorly digestible diets cause excessive fermentation in the colon and subsequent gas formation. Soybeans, peas, beans, milk products, high-fat diets and spicy foods are all commonly associated with flatulence in dogs. Dogs and cats are often lactose intolerant and if they are fed milk or dairy products they will often experience flatulence and GI upset. A dog that is being fed a premium diet and is still experiencing flatulence should be tested for malassimilation (which means either poor digestion or poor absorption of nutrients from the diet). Flatulence can sometimes also be caused by bacterial infection.



Dogs that swallow air, especially those that eat rapidly, are more likely to experience flatulence. Difficulty breathing or excessive panting can also result in swallowing air. Uncontrolled pain and Cushing's Disease are common causes of excessive panting. Overweight, obese and sedentary dogs are at higher risk for developing chronic flatulence, regardless of diet.

## ***What are the clinical signs of flatulence?***

The most common clinical signs include expulsion of gas from the anus, with or without odor, mild abdominal discomfort, mild stomach distention or bloating, and excessive gaseous sounds or rumbling from the abdomen (borborygmus). If the dog has an underlying malassimilation problem, clinical signs will also include loose stools or diarrhea, vomiting and/or weight loss.

## ***How is flatulence diagnosed?***

Diagnosis is based on medical history and clinical signs. Some of the common causes that must be ruled out include:

- Increased Swallowing of Air (Aerophagia)
- Gluttony or compulsive eating
- Respiratory disease
- Feeding shortly after exercise
- Brachycephalic or flat-faced breeds
- Diet
- Diets high in soybeans, peas or beans
- Diets high in fermentable fibers such as lactulose, psyllium or oat bran
- Spoiled food
- Milk and dairy products

- Sudden change in diet
- Spicy foods and food additives
- Diseases
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- Small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO)
- Tumors
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
- Intestinal parasites
- Enteritis
- Exocrine pancreatic insufficiency (EPI)
- Motility disorder, where the intestines do not move properly

Other diagnostic tests include fecal examination and evaluation, rectal cytology, fecal cultures, blood and urine tests, trypsin-like immunoreactivity (TLI), serum cobalamin and folate tests, abdominal radiographs, abdominal ultrasound and intestinal biopsies.

### ***How is flatulence treated?***

Treatment is based on diagnosis and commonly involves a change in diet. Diet recommendations include a diet that is highly digestible with low fiber and fat. Medical therapy may include carminitives (medications to relieve flatulence) such as zinc acetate, *Yucca schidigera*, dry activated charcoal or simethicone. Small, frequent feedings are encouraged for dogs that eat rapidly or are hyperexcitable. “Slow Bowls” that physically slow the process of eating can also be helpful. Some “slow bowls” work well, but many don’t help at all – talk to your vet about the type of “slow bowl” that might be best for your pet. Your veterinarian will outline a treatment plan specifically designed for your pet.

### ***What is the prognosis for resolving flatulence?***

Most patients with uncomplicated cases respond well to dietary and lifestyle changes. Once offending dietary substances and products are identified, it is important to avoid them.

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