

# GUT INSTINCT

## BEATING THE BLOAT

We've all experienced bloating - that full, tight feeling in your abdomen, which is often uncomfortable, sometimes even painful.

This increased abdominal pressure is often due to the presence of gas, and may or may not, be associated with abdominal distension (visual enlargement of the waist).



Bloating can be caused by conditions like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), constipation, small bacterial overgrowth (excessive bacteria in the small intestine) and gastroparesis (delayed emptying of the stomach), but it can also be caused by ingestion of certain foods you are intolerant to.

**There are several strategies you can try that will help minimise the bloat!**

### 1. Slow down at meal times and don't overeat

When you eat quickly, you also tend to eat more. Try slowing down the pace at meal times, enjoy each mouthful and chew well. By chewing slowly and carefully, this will prevent excess air entering the digestive tract. Drinking through a straw can lead to excess air being swallowed also.

### 2. Eat at regular intervals

To combat bloating, many medical professionals will recommend moving from the standard 3 meals per day to having smaller meals more frequently. This way, the digestive system is kept in constant operation.

### 3. Gradually increase intake of fibre

Did you know fibre prevents constipation and bloating? It is important to introduce extra fibre slowly and gradually, to let the body adjust. Too much fibre at once can actually cause bloating.

### 4. Seek guidance from a dietitian for a low FODMAP diet

For some, a diet high in FODMAPS (hard to absorb carbohydrates) can induce constipation and/or diarrhoea, bloating, wind and abdominal pain. High FODMAP foods incl. apples, pears, watermelon, wheat, rye, onions, legumes, cabbage, stone fruits and mushrooms.

A low FODMAP diet is most effective if tailored to the individual as not all high FODMAP foods will be a trigger for you. A low FODMAP diet is also not to be followed strictly long term, foods should be re-introduced. We recommend seeing a specialist dietitian to assist you with this diet.

### 5. Be mindful of Sugar Alcohols

Sugar alcohols are the sweeteners found in sugar-free foods and chewing gums. If present in a large quantity, these can cause digestive issues as the bacteria in your gut digests them, which produces gas.

## 6. Check with your doctor to rule out any medical conditions

Bloating is a very common symptom of several medical conditions. If you have prolonged bloating or your bloating is not helped by trying some of these strategies, see your doctor. If there is a diagnosis of a medical condition like inflammatory bowel disease for example, treatment can be commenced that may reduce or eliminate your bloating altogether.

### DID YOU KNOW ?



The soluble fibre found in kiwis can help support healthy gut bacteria, while the insoluble fibre found in the fruit can help keep bowel movements regular.



Kiwis contain an enzyme, actinidin, which can help improve digestion and promote stomach emptying. Therefore, not only can they be effective for relieving constipation, but also can be helpful in reducing bloating.

## WHAT IS EOSINOPHILIC OESOPHAGITIS?



**It is estimated that 1 in 100 Australian adults suffer from this disorder.**

Eosinophilic Oesophagitis (EoE for short) is a chronic inflammatory condition that affects the oesophagus, the tube connecting the throat and stomach. This disorder is characterised by an abnormal accumulation of eosinophils (a type of white blood cell) in the oesophageal lining. They can accumulate in response to food and/or airborne allergens.

### What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of EoE can differ from person to person. Common ones include -

- **Difficulty swallowing** - People may experience the sensation of food getting stuck in the throat or chest.
- **Heartburn**
- **Regurgitation** - People may experience regurgitation of undigested food or acid into the mouth.
- **Abdominal pain**
- **Nausea** & occasionally, vomiting

### How is it Diagnosed?

Your doctor will take a medical history & discuss your symptoms. A gastroscopy will be performed where a number of biopsies are taken and analysed to confirm EoE diagnosis.

### Treatment

The treatment of EoE aims to manage symptoms, reduce inflammation, and prevent complications.

If left untreated, EoE can lead to permanent scarring and narrowing of the oesophagus which increases the chance to food getting stuck. Early diagnosis and personalised treatment plans are crucial in improving the quality of life for individuals with EoE.

If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms of EoE, please make an appointment with your doctor promptly to receive an accurate diagnosis and start appropriate treatment.