Bloating

Bloating is the feeling of fullness in your belly. You may feel as though your pants are too tight. Often the cause of bloating is overeating, retaining fluids, or having gas in your bowel. It is also caused by swallowing air and eating foods that cause gas. Irritable bowel syndrome is one of the most common causes of bloating. Constipation is also a common cause. Sometimes more serious problems can cause bloating.

SYMPTOMS

Usually there is a feeling of fullness, as though your abdomen is bulged out. There may be mild discomfort.

DIAGNOSIS

Usually no particular testing is necessary for most bloating. If the condition persists and seems to become worse, your caregiver may do additional testing.

TREATMENT

- There is no direct treatment for bloating.
- Do not put gas into the bowel. Avoid chewing gum and sucking on candy. These tend to make you swallow air. Swallowing air can also be a nervous habit. Try to avoid this.
- Avoiding high residue diets will help. Eat foods with soluble fibers (examples include, root vegetables, apples, barley) and substitute dairy products with soy and rice products. This helps irritable bowel syndrome.
- If constipation is the cause, then a high residue diet with more fiber will help.
- Avoid carbonated beverages.
- Over the counter preparations are available that help reduce gas. Your pharmacist can help you with this.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Bloating continues and seems to be getting worse.
- You notice a weight gain.
- You have a weight loss but the bloating is getting worse.
- You have changes in your bowel habits or develop nausea or vomiting.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop shortness of breath or swelling in your legs.
- You have an increase in abdominal pain or develop chest pain.

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