

Student

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S401. TCM Classics

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Bloating

Bloating is a sensation of feeling full, tight, or swollen in the abdomen. Bloating is common both adults and children. The term of Bloating has been first described by Alvarez of the Mayo Clinic in 1949. Dr. Walter Clement Alvarez (1884 – 1978) notarized IBS (Irritable bowel syndrome). In USA, 15-30% of general population has been reported to experience bloating. Also, in Asia, similar result has been shown 15-23%. Bloating and distension are different disorder. However, the symptoms are often occurred together. Therefore, we use “Bloating” as a public term contained the meaning of “distension”. Bloating is the subjective symptom due to internal gas accumulation, and distension is the objective sign due to internal organs swollen. Hypersensitivity in the abdomen plays a major role in bloating and has a great association with diarrhoea-predominant. Distension is more commonly associated with constipation-predominant, often caused by slow intestinal transit. However, bloating could occur alone without associated diseases. There has been not enough data of randomized controlled trials for treatment of bloating alone. And it has not been fully understood to date. (4)

The pain mechanism of bloating is due to gas especially after eating. Gas builds up in the digestive tract when undigested food gets broken down or when you swallow air. Pains that are due to bloating will feel sharp and cause the stomach to cramp. These pains may occur anywhere in the body and can change locations quickly. At any time, the average individual has 100–200 cc of gas within the GI tract. Colonic gas production occurs by colonic bacteria in small intestine when these foods are in digested: such as, lactose, fructose, sorbitol, legumes, fiber, and complex carbohydrates (ie, wheat). (5) Diet is the one of important roles to prevent and treat bloating conditions.

The causes of bloating may be due to medical conditions. In serious causes, abdominal bloating can also be a symptom of ascites (pathologic fluid accumulation) as a result of cancer, bacterial flora, SIBO, and individual constitutions of food intolerance and psychological factors. (1) Ruling out these sever cases are essential skills for practitioners.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) classic textbook of Huang Di Neijing, Suwen was written about the bloating or distension around 2600 BC. Huang Di wrote bloating occurs in the abdominal, rib area and internal organs. The causes are phycological, cooler climate, Spleen function problems (food or water transmission) and Meridian pathology led to imbalance of Yin/Yang and another meridian which connecting to abdominal in TCM. (3) TCM Acupuncture, Acupressure, Herbal tea, Massage and Diets has discussed, has showed good results and inherited for treating the bloating conditions.

TCM is the best alternative treatment for bloating. The treatments for bloating have not been standardized and there is no evidence-based algorithm in Western Medicine (WM) yet. In TCM, bloating is the condition of Qi stagnation in abdominal area. Acupuncture needles stimulate the channels where are Qi is passing. The channels are connecting with internal organs. When Qi was stimulated by Acupuncture needles, Qi is encouraged and move into internal organ through the channels. Therefore, organs awake with their functions, recover the relationship with other organs and help to push out

excess gas out or prevent production abnormal gas. As well as, it helps to reduce and eliminate organs inflammation. For example, Liver function is sooth Qi in whole body, Spleen function is translating Qi from foods and transport Qi to internal organs or body systems. As soon as the acupuncture needles insert proper acupuncture points, Acupuncturist or patients can feel the abdominal movements. It happens often specially the patients who are suffered from abdominal distension, bloating or mental disorders. Additionally, often we can see, after treatments, patients rush to go the washroom. (6)

There are treatments to prevent or relieve bloating: Diet suggestions, Herbal tea

Treatments to prevent or relieve bloating:

- Lifestyle changes (losing weight)
- to reduce swallowing too much air
- avoid chewing gum
- limit carbonated drinks
- avoid foods that cause gas (FODMAPs)
- eat slowly and avoid drinking through a straw
- use lactose-free dairy products (2)

Dietary suggestions

Avoiding foods: FODMAPs

- Fruits: Apple, Apricot, Blackberry, Cherry, Peach, Pear, Prune, Watermelon
- Vegetables: Asparagus, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Garlic, Mushroom, Shallot
- Legumes: Baked beans, Chickpeas, Kidney beans, Lentils
- Grains: Wheat, Barley or Rye
- Dairy: Milk (from cows, goats and sheep), yoghurt, ice cream
- Sweeteners: Sorbitol, mannitol, maltitol, xylitol, high fructose corn syrup

Recommended foods for relief: probiotics in kefir and Greek yogurt (70% people affected)

Herbal to reduce bloating:

- *Bitter*: help qi move downwards, and to benefit digestion (tangerine or orange-peel tea with a dash of sugar)
- *Aromatic*: warm the stomach, expels dampness and helps qi flow more smoothly (Rose and jujube date tea)
- *Barley malt (mai ya)*: promotes gastric acid secretion, contains enzymes, help break down starch, aids digestion and strengthens liver qi (stew some barley malt grains in hot water to make a tea)

Other way to prevent or treatment for bloating: Use a hot water bottle after meals, massage abdominal, drink warm fluids, and avoid cold or frozen foods (6) Be aware of your intolerances to certain food. Maintain a food diary and keep track of the food that causes you to bloat.

Exercise regularly. Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise at least twice a week. This helps to improve the qi and circulation of the body, as well as intestinal motility.

If the bloating persists and causes discomfort for more than 6 weeks, or it significantly affects daily life, it is advisable to seek medical treatment. (9)

(1) <https://www.healthline.com/health/abdominal-bloating>

What's Causing My Abdominal Bloating, and How Do I Treat It? Medically reviewed by Michele Chodorado, M.D. — Written by Maureen Donohue — Updated on March 19, 2020

(2) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloating>

Bloating, From Wikipedia

(3) The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine, : A New Translation of the Neijing Suwen with Commentary, Book by Maoshing Ni, CH39, 45, 70, 74

(4) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3816178/>

Seo, A Young et al. "Abdominal bloating: pathophysiology and treatment." Journal of neurogastroenterology and motility vol. 19,4 (2013): 433-53. doi:10.5056/jnm.2013.19.4.433

(5) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3264926/>

Lacy, Brian E et al. "Pathophysiology, evaluation, and treatment of bloating: hope, hype, or hot air?." Gastroenterology & hepatology vol. 7,11 (2011): 729-39.

(6) <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/china/articles/traditional-chinese-medicine-tricks-to-feel-less-bloated/>

Traditional Chinese Medicine Tricks to Feel Less Bloating,

(7) <https://www.centeredrichmondacupuncture.com/acupuncture-and-bloating/>

centered Richmond acupuncture and wellness, Acupuncture and bloating

(8) <https://www.pulsetcm.sg/beat-the-bloat/>

BEAT THE BLOAT, BY PHYSICIAN KANG TING TAN, POSTED IN WELL-BEING

(9) <https://thefunctionalgutclinic.com/blog/news/what-is-bloating-and-distention/>

What Is Bloating and Distention? 02 July 2018, functional Gut clinic