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Passing Gas

Farting is the act of releasing gas from your anus, otherwise referred to as the hole in your butt. The formal word for fart is *flatulence*: from Latin *flatus* 'blowing.' Farts are also called gassers, stinkers, air biscuits, bombers, barking spiders, rotten eggs, and wet ones. You can pass gas, break wind, blast, poof, rip one, let one fly, and cut the cheese. As Juliet Capulet said to Romeo, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Everyone farts. The only requirement for farting is that you have gas in your digestive tract; that is, your esophagus, stomach, small intestine, or large intestine. Fart gas comes from air that you swallow and from the normal breakdown of foodstuff by bacteria in your large intestine.

Belching is the way you get rid of most air that you swallow while eating and drinking. Any gas that remains after that big after-dinner burp moves on to your small intestine, where it is partially absorbed. Then, what little is left travels into your large intestine destined for release through your anus.

In the end, it's bacteria in your intestines that get credit for causing most of the gas that makes you fart. It all happens in your large intestine (or colon) as bacteria work to digest sugars and starches that haven't already been digested in your small intestine. Those gas-producing bacteria produce hydrogen, carbon dioxide, and sometimes methane as they digest food.

The bacteria also make small amounts of hydrogen sulfide and mercaptans, both of which contain sulfur. That's what gives gas its smell. The more sulfur-rich food you eat, the more sulfides and mercaptans your body makes, the worse your farts smell. Cauliflower, corn, bell peppers, cabbage, milk, bread, eggs, and raisins make for really foul smelling farts. Beans make you fart a lot, but bean-farts usually aren't that smelly.

Important Facts to Know

1. The average person farts 14 times a day.
2. Vibrations of your anal opening make fart noise, not the flapping of your butt cheeks.
3. The smelliest farts, euphemistically referred to as SBDs (silent-but-deadly), are usually warmer and quieter than regular farts.
4. Eating stimulates peristalsis, a series of smooth muscle contractions that pushes foodstuffs through your intestines and toward your anus. That's why you fart and poop right after a meal.
5. Girls fart just as much as guys, although guys take more pride in fart-related accomplishments than do girls.
6. Holding a fart won't make it go away. Sooner or later it's going to happen.
7. Farting is sometimes your body's message to you that it's time to visit the porcelain throne.
8. People fart in their sleep.
9. Farts are flammable because they contain hydrogen (spelled H-i-n-d-e-n-b-u-r-g) and methane. Be careful.

Farting at an inopportune moment can be embarrassing. When this happens, there are many different strategies to deal with the situation. You can, of course, fess up to your indiscretion. Or if you suspect people may not know it's you that farted, you can act oblivious and glance knowingly at the person next to you. Or you can try alternative strategies to disguise your deed, like coughing or moving your chair so that people might think they misheard the fart.

Passing Gas Dos and Don'ts

- Try to fart only when you're alone.
- Don't fart at the dinner table or in enclosed spaces, like elevators.
- Say, "Excuse me!" if you fart by accident and everyone knows it was you.
- Enjoy your farts. They are here to stay.

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