

# Top strategies to keep bloating at bay

Whether it's from overeating, choosing the wrong foods, or taking certain medications, many Americans are all too familiar with the discomfort associated with bloating.

"We're seeing a virtual epidemic of bloating because all the things we do on a daily basis that conspire to bloat us that we don't know about," Dr. Robynne Chutkan, a gastroenterologist at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., told "[CBS This Morning](#)."

In her new book, "The Bloat Cure: 101 Natural Solutions for Real and Lasting Relief," Chutkan writes, "I've helped deflate thousands of women and get them comfortably back into their [skinny jeans](#)."

First, she points out that women are more susceptible to bloating than men based on anatomy.

"Women have a longer colon than men, about 10 centimeters longer. That might not seem like a lot but it leads to a lot of twists and turns where gas can get trapped, and it just makes it harder for the products of digestion to get down to the finish line," she said.

Hormones play a role, too. "Men have higher levels of testosterone, which means a tighter, firmer abdominal wall that holds everything in, kind of like a built-in Spanx," Chutkan said.

But there are steps those who suffer from bloating can take to reduce symptoms.

Diet plays a major role in regulating the digestive system. Cruciferous [vegetables](#) including [broccoli](#), kale, cauliflower, and cabbage, are notorious for causing bloating.

"[These] vegetables come with a lot of potent cancer-fighting compounds, so again they're healthy... but they also have a carbohydrate called raffinose which we can't completely digest," Chutkan said.

To prevent the overly-gassy symptoms that often accompany eating these greens, Chutkan recommends adding lemon juice to stimulate digestive enzymes.

Certain medications can also increase bloating. [Heartburn drugs](#), for example, which work by suppressing acid, can bring on bloating by changing the environment of the stomach.

"Acid-suppressing drugs work very effectively which is why they're very helpful for heartburn, but they also turn the pH of the stomach from acidic into alkali and turn it from an inhospitable, unfriendly place for gut bacteria to a very friendly, hospitable place for gut bacteria to multiply and overgrow in the stomach," Chutkan said. This, in turn, produces a lot of gas, she explained.

Antidepressants can also slow down movement through the digestive tract, leading to bloating.

Chutkan said a good way to determine if you are experiencing bloating -- as opposed to some extra [belly fat](#) -- is to measure break out a tape measure.

"Bloating typically ebbs and flows, so in the morning, you're flat as a pancake," she said. "By the end of the day, you're popping out of your pants."

Chutkan recommends measuring your waist at both morning and night over a few days. "If you're bloated, there's a lot of variation in that measurement," she said, "whereas if it's belly fat masquerading as bloat, it doesn't change by much."