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BELCHING: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Belching is a normal physiologic process and the expulsion results from swallowed air accumulating in the stomach. We all swallow some amounts of air during the process of eating.

Aerophagia is a disorder where patients swallow air frequently in large quantities. Some of the swallowed air is vented through gastric belches and part of the air reaches the intestines where it causes abdominal distension and bloating. Extreme volumes of air can be swallowed in patients with mental disabilities.

WHAT CAN MAKE US SWALLOW MORE AIR?

1. Sucking on hard candies or chewing gum
2. Drinking carbonated beverages such as soda or beer
3. Anxiety states
4. Poorly fitting dentures and chronic postnasal “drip”
5. Drinking with a straw
6. Eating too fast

TREATMENT

1. Eliminate carbonated beverages such as **soda and beer**.
2. **Foods** such as cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, beans, and bran should be avoided. Milk and other dairy foods should be avoided. Lactaid milk or non-dairy milk such as soy or almond milk can be used.
3. **Chewing gum and sucking** on hard candies should be avoided. Sugar free gum and hard candies should be avoided as they may have Mannitol or Sorbitol as sweeteners which can cause flatulence.
4. If anxiety is contributing to the problem, consider **anti-anxiety therapy**
5. In patients with Aerophagia, to reduce air swallowing, **speech or behavioral therapy** may be necessary.
6. An **upper endoscopy**, or in some cases an upper GI barium test, maybe used to rule out abnormalities in the stomach that could prevent its normal function.
7. **Reassurance:** Once reasonable workup has been performed, there is no need for ongoing concern. Belching is more of an inconvenience rather than a serious medical condition.