

ARE YOU BURPING TOO MUCH?

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There are two things that humans must be able to do right after being born: Cry and burp. This bodily release that usually comes with a distinct sound for each person offers comfort and satisfaction, especially after a lip-smacking meal or drinking a refreshing can of soda. Burping, though sometimes embarrassing in social settings, can be good for us—but only when it's not too much.

For Dr. Carlo M. Cornejo, section chief of gastroenterology at Makati Medical Center (MakatiMed), understanding when burping becomes excessive is crucial in maintaining digestive health.

“The average person burps around three to six times after eating or drinking. You might burp more frequently after drinking carbonated beverages like sodas, but overall, that's a pretty healthy range,” says Dr. Cornejo. Simple excess burping should be resolved by eating and drinking more slowly and avoiding carbonated drinks and certain foods like hard candy. “Eating and drinking too quickly and sucking on hard candy causes you to swallow more air than normal. Dropping these habits should reduce belching significantly,” he adds.

MakatiMed, however, points out that burping combined with other symptoms can be a cause for concern. For instance, excess belching that comes with an uncomfortable burning sensation in your chest could be a sign of gastroesophageal reflux disease, more commonly known as GERD.

“GERD happens when the acidic contents of your stomach, known as reflux, move up into your esophagus. Reflux itself causes the urge to burp,” says Dr. Cornejo. “If you have GERD, you can take antacids to relieve the symptoms or avoid acidic foods and drinks like anything fried and cheesy as well as sodas and alcohol.” Diarrhea is another symptom that when combined with burping suggests a more serious underlying health issue. The two often go together in cases of food poisoning, traveler's diarrhea or stomach flu.

“All of these can happen when you eat or drink something unclean and disruptive to your gastrointestinal system. Though these conditions are common and typically go away on their own, severe cases can be life-threatening if left unchecked,” the doctor warns. “In this case, you may be asked to take more fluids, antibiotics and probiotics to avoid dehydration, complications and speed up recovery.”

On a more serious note, burping that comes with abdominal discomfort or pain, unintentional weight loss or vomiting with or without blood can be a sign of certain types of gastrointestinal cancers like stomach, pancreatic or esophageal cancer. “Further diagnostic tests like endoscopy and CT scanning can help us accurately determine if cancer is indeed present.”

He adds, “What I'd like to emphasize is for you to pay more attention to your body. Take note of even the most mundane bodily functions like burping, as they could give you a hint of what's happening inside your body. Excessive burping along with the alarming symptoms mentioned can be your body's way of telling you to seek medical advice as soon as possible.”