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Expert advice on how to beat the bloating this Christmas

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The countdown to Christmas has officially begun which means many of us will be munching on mince pies and enjoying a mulled wine in the coming days.



However, overindulging on our favourite tasty treats throughout December can lead to bloating which doesn't feel very festive.

We have spoken to a nutritionist who has explained what might be causing this uncomfortable feeling, and she has also offered tips on how to enjoy the lead-up to Christmas without feeling like a stuffed turkey...

What causes bloating?

"Signs of bloating include a feeling of fullness or pressure in your abdomen, your abdomen feels bigger than usual, you may have stomach pain and discomfort and your stomach may gurgle or rumble," says Dr Emma Derbyshire, public health nutritionist and advisor to PrecisionBiotics. "Bloating can range from mildly uncomfortable to intensively painful."

The most common cause of bloating is gastrointestinal gas, explains the nutritionist.

"This can be a digestive issue and may be simply caused by eating too fast, a food intolerance or food allergy that causes digestive issues and gas to build up," notes Dr Derbyshire. Other factors such as the menstrual cycle can also contribute to the unpleasant feeling.

"As your period approaches hormone levels change, causing your body to retain water and cause bloating," explains Dr Derbyshire. "Anxiety can also cause bloating often due to the swallowing of air.

"Conditions such as irritable bowel may also result in bloating."

Why do some get it more often?

"Some people are more prone to the condition than others due to factors like food intolerances, IBS and an unhealthy balance of gut bacteria – ie. a lower proportion of healthy to less healthy bacteria," highlights Dr Derbyshire.

"An unhealthy gut microbiota may be caused by diet with highly processed food high in fat, sugar

and salt being a possible culprit."

Why is it common at Christmas?

"Bloating is often compounded when we overindulge at Christmas," recognises Dr Derbyshire.

“The foods we eat during the holidays are often high in fat, sugar and refined carbohydrates which are tasty and easy to eat quickly and in large amounts and can be difficult to digest.

“The stress of Christmas and also too much alcohol may also contribute to bloating.”

Here are some ways to prevent bloating during the festive period...

Cut back on your cruciferous veg

“Cutting your intake of cruciferous vegetables such as cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and legumes such as peas, beans and lentils can also help reduce wind and bloating,” says Dr Derbyshire.

take some exercise

“Keep moving with a good walk or run each day,” recommends Dr Derbyshire. “Try some exercise snacks round the house: squats, push ups, and a few weights if you have them.”

eat less sugary Christmas treats

“Go easy on the high-fat, high-sugar Christmas treats which can contribute to less healthy gut bacteria,” advises Dr Derbyshire. “However, there is no need to totally avoid these foods – just aim for smaller quantities.”

Manage your stress levels

“Practice techniques like slow deep breathing and try to relax,” says Dr Derbyshire.

Be sure to stay hydrated

“Go easy on the alcohol and stay hydrated,” suggests Dr Derbyshire.

try using (the right) probiotics

Dr Derbyshire suggests introducing healthy bacteria into the gut.

“But it’s important to look to studied strains such as Bifidobacterium longum 35624 which are backed by studies and have been shown to reduce abdominal pain and bloating,” she adds.