

Why Do I Feel Bloating?

Do you feel bloated? *Abdominal bloating* refers to the sensation of abdominal inflation or swelling that may or may not be accompanied by measurable distension of the belly. According to an article by Dr. Brian E. Lacy, Dr. Scott L. Gabbard, and Michael D. Crowell, PhD, titled "[Pathophysiology, Evaluation, and Treatment of Bloating](#)," studies have shown that 15–30 percent of the U.S. population experience bloating symptoms. Obviously, that statistic doesn't represent occasional bloating such as a full belly after Thanksgiving dinner. Instead, the stat refers to people who suffer from chronic or recurring bloating that cannot easily be traced to a specific cause.



If you've experienced such bloating, you know all too well that it can be uncomfortable, annoying, painful, and embarrassing. At BioDesign Wellness Center, a [Tampa Functional Medicine practice](#), we often hear complaints from patients that their clothes no longer fit or that they look pregnant! Bloating can be a real setback to a person's self-esteem, and it can be a frustrating

problem. That's because regardless of how diligent someone may be in following a strict diet and exercise regime, many patients continue to feel bloated.

Worse yet, modern medicine has no single solution. We have pills for indigestion and gas, but no pharmaceutical equivalent for bloating. (Granted, you can find numerous de-bloat supplements on the market, but in medical experience, they're mostly ineffective or provide only temporary relief.) Given how common bloating is, the absence of a medication for bloating may seem surprising, but bloating is usually just a symptom of an underlying condition, such as a food sensitivity or yeast or bacterial overgrowth in the gut.

Causes of Bloating

Many conditions can cause bloating, including the following:

- Intestinal disorders, such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), Crohn's disease, and ulcerative colitis
- Hormone imbalances, possibly linked to menstrual periods or premenstrual syndrome
- Yeast or bacterial overgrowth in the gut, often referred to as small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO)
- Food allergies or sensitivities, such as lactose intolerance or celiac disease (gluten intolerance)
- Indigestion
- Eating too much or too fast
- Constipation
- Smoking
- Liver disease, such as fatty liver
- Gallstones
- Emotional stress

While there's no scientific evidence suggesting bloating affects

women more than men (*with the only exception being in the case of IBS, where women experience significantly higher rates of bloating than do men*), here are the top five causes of bloating in women:

- **Diet:** Dairy is often a culprit, but a diet high in sugar or grains can also cause bloating, as can excessive consumption of alcohol.
- **Perimenopause or menopause:** Hormone imbalances can cause water retention and bloating. This is common and can be managed by balancing hormones and by detoxing, which enhances the body's ability to process hormones.
- **Small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO) or yeast overgrowth:** Imbalances of microorganisms in the gut (intestines) can result in poor digestion and nutrient absorption, along with *leaky gut* – a condition in which the lining of the small intestine becomes damaged, allowing undigested food particles, waste products, and microbes to leak out of the intestine and into the bloodstream. (See our previous post "[Understanding Small Intestinal Bacteria Overgrowth](#)" for details.)
- **Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD):** The liver's primary function is to filter blood coming from the digestive tract before passing it to the rest of the body. It's the main detox organ in the body. Over time, it becomes full, much like a bucket. When full, the liver can no longer handle the food, drinks, toxins, medication, and stress of daily life. Ultimately, waste products accumulate as fat in the liver, and once the liver becomes fatty, it's an uphill climb to lose weight and bloat.
- **Emotional stress:** Stress results in imbalances in gut microbiota, brain chemicals, and hormones, and all of these imbalances contribute to bloating. This is why selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (a class of

antidepressants) help patients with IBS.

Note: If you experience bloating, it's probably caused by a combination of two or more of the factors listed above. To treat the bloating effectively, all causes need to be addressed.



Self-Help for Bloating

You may be able to alleviate bloating on your own or with the help of your primary physician (or gynecologist). Here are a few solutions to consider:

- Adjust your diet to avoid sugar, dairy, and excessive grains.
- If you are on birth control or hormones, consult your prescribing physician about the possibility of having them adjusted or discontinued. (It is usually a better idea to start with a detox protocol to support your liver in removing excess hormones. Many people do not know this,

but your liver must process your hormones and eliminate them after use.)

- Find ways to reduce stress and improve sleep. Meditation or mindfulness training may help. This will create hormonal and brain changes that can positively impact your gut health and reduce bloating.

Eliminate Bloating Once and for All

If, despite your best efforts, you continue to feel bloated, seek professional medical care. Bloating is a sign that something is just not right. While it may not be life threatening, bloating can negatively impact your confidence and your quality of life.

Our three-step treatment protocol can help you eliminate bloating once and for all:

1. **Discover:** We conduct a thorough physical exam and patient history and order targeted lab tests to identify the underlying cause(s) of your bloating. During this stage, we look for items in your diet that may be causing problems, test for SIBO, test and examine your hormone levels, talk with you about potential sources of stress in your life, and so on. We follow a test-first approach, so we know what's going on below the surface before we prescribe any medications, supplements, or other treatments that could do more harm than good if used inappropriately.
2. **Repair:** The second step is to fix the problem(s) – to address the underlying cause(s). We may “prescribe” diet or lifestyle changes, medications, supplements, or other treatments that target the root causes of the bloating. Treatment often includes medically supervised detox to help your detox organs (liver, kidneys, sweat glands, and lungs) and your bowels and urinary tract eliminate toxins

from your body. Treatments may also focus on restoring a healthy balance of gut microbiota and hormones, improving sleep (quantity and quality), and reducing stress.

3. **Optimize:** The objective of this third stage of our protocol is to make you feel your best. Think of this stage as the icing on the cake. Treatment varies according to your health and fitness objectives. We may prescribe [hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\)](#), [therapeutic peptides](#), nutritional supplements, changes in diet or exercise, and so on.

Although we follow this three-step protocol with every patient, everyone is different. Your genetic profile, personality, diet, work history, relationships, where you live, what you eat, and so forth make you unique. Accordingly, we develop a personalized treatment plan optimized for you, and we monitor your progress and adjust treatments as your health improves. Don't settle for anything less.

If you're experiencing chronic or recurring bloating and are ready to do something about it, please call Lori, BioDesign's customer experience manager, at (813) 445-7770 to schedule a consultation.

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