

Winter 2026

Issue 22



INSIDE OUT
Stoma Support Group

Stoma Support Group Working with St Mark's the National Bowel Hospital, CMH.

Incorporated with St Mark's Hospital Foundation Charity Registration No: 1140930

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year 2026

I hope this year for all of us is a healthier and a peaceful one for around the world. I apologise for the delay in getting this newsletter out to you all, I hope to do better, you know you start with good intentions and then something distracts you from what you intended doing.

Thank you all for making it to our Christmas party, I for one was happy to see some faces from the past who came along and some of our reps past and present ones, thank you for coming and supporting our group over the 26 years. We have seen so many changes in those years companies expanding by amalgamating with others and those who have diversified and all these companies have one thing in mind and that is the ostomist for their health and wellbeing, for which we all thank you.

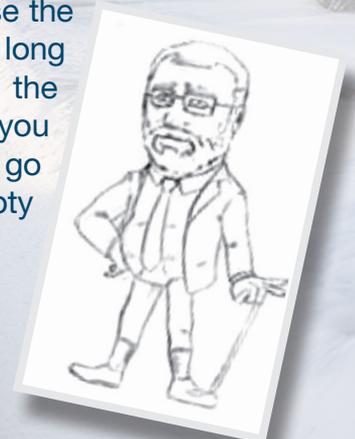
Since several of you have been having some issues with the new scanner system, which is used in the airports by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), I have been in touch with them, and I also wrote to CE and Chair of British Airways (BA), at Heathrow. The CAA has been back in touch, and we have a meeting scheduled for the end of this month. Sam Evans (stoma care nurse consultant), Jules Plum (education consultant at Dansac),

Barry and myself. Between us we hope to set up the guidelines of how ostomists, when going through these scans may avoid any embarrassment on either side. We will keep you updated as soon as we have verified how best for both parties to go ahead forward.

As for the man from BA, we still await to hear from him! We have sent emails and a recorded delivery letter, (which was not cheap). We should go on either local radio station or local TV and ask why we have not heard. We have suggested that we help to educate both his ground crew and air crew on how to deal with ostomist in the air especially. We all have those moments that we are unable to control sphincter muscles, unlike those who are (normal, lets say), if our bags fill, then there is no place to go other than the loo and allowances should be made to utilise the forward loo, if there is a long line to the tail end of the aeroplane. It is not as if you can step outside and go behind a cloud and empty your bag!!

Kind regards

Bob



LET'S TALK ABOUT FLATUS

Sarah Varma CNS
Isle of Wight NHS Trust



To the British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG) every day we pass 400 to 2000ml of flatus. About 90% of this is made up of five gases: nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide, hydrogen and methane. Flatulence is the expulsion of gas from the intestines via the anus, other names associated are farting, popping, blowing off, apparently there is 150 different words for “Fart”!!

Flatus is the medical word for gas generated in the stomach or bowel and the average person farts 15 times a day, but the ‘normal’ range is wider. The more flatus you produce, the more often and loudly you will release it.

So why do “farts” make a noise? This is because the gas being released vibrates the surrounding tissues, specifically the anal sphincter muscles, as it exits the body. The shape of the anal opening along with the speed and amount of gas expelled, influence the sound produced. However, when your sphincter is relaxed, your farts tend to make the quite puffed sound; “My sphincter must be on consent high alert”.

Why do we have bag odours from “farts”? this can be due to gas called

hydrogen sulphide, which has a characteristic of rotten egg odour. This gas is produced by gut bacteria during the breakdown of certain foods, especially those containing sulphur or carbohydrates.

A more detailed explanation:

- ❖ **Hydrogen Sulphide** – This is suggested to be the primary culprit behind smelly fart. It’s a sulphur-containing gas that byproduct of bacterial digestion in the gut.
- ❖ **Dietary Factors** – Certain foods, like eggs, meat, cruciferous vegetables (which are under the variety of vegetable such as broccoli, cauliflower, kale etc, known for being rich in fibre), beans and dairy products can increase hydrogen sulphide production.
- ❖ **Gut Microbiome** – The composition of gut bacteria can also influence the amount of smelly gas produced.
- ❖ **Other Factors** – Constipation, breakdown of carbohydrates, and the presence of sulphurs in foods can also contribute to smelly farts.

What are the general symptoms related to intestinal gas? Pain, bloating and abdominal distention, excessive flatus volume, excessive flatus odour.

Flatus and a stoma – these two stomas surgically created openings. The colostomy opening into the colon through the abdomen, the bowel waste is eliminated through the colostomy. Likewise, the ileostomy is also surgically created opening into the small intestine through the abdomen, and its purpose is to bypass the colon, and stool is eliminated through the ileostomy. Both the colostomy and ileostomy do not have sphincter muscles, so you do not have any voluntary control over bowel movements, and this includes flatus.

Flatus from a stoma (ileostomy / colostomy) is different from regular flatulent emissions (farts) as we are able to control a regular fart with rectal sphincter control, you can not control when your stoma release gas.

Nobody wants to release noisy gas odours at the wrong time, and this fear can cause anxiety, apprehensions, and even avoidance of social situations. In time you may become more attuned to the feel of your colostomy / ileostomy and feel when you are about to pass stool or gas, although you still will not be able to stop it.

Let us look at prevention, hint and tips.

What causes ballooning?

- ❖ Swallowing excessive air
- ❖ Smoking heavily
- ❖ Chewing gum
- ❖ Eating rapidly
- ❖ Not chewing properly and therefore swallowing large pieces of food

- ❖ Eating a lot of gas – producing foods like beans, cabbage and lentils
- ❖ Consuming fizzy drinks

Ballooning occurs when there is a gradual build up and accumulation of flatulence in the bags. The flatus which is passed through the stoma fills the bag gradually, just like inflating a balloon. It eventually fills up until it appears like a balloon attached to the abdomen, and of course it bulges out through clothing.

Filters: Ostomy bags / pouches are manufactured with filters that deodorises as they vent flatus out of the pouch. If accumulated air is not let out through the filter of the disposable or drainable bags, the pressure builds up may make your stoma ache slightly and cause some discomfort.

Deodorants: to help decrease odours there are liquid drops and deodorised lubrication that can be added to the bags. These items are on prescription – please speak to one of the stoma care nurses if you would like to try either item. Deodorising sprays are not on prescription.

Foods to reduce flatus: the following foods can cause build up and will result in frequent ballooning.

- ❖ **Colostomy:** nuts, cabbages, onions, garlic, cauliflower, asparagus, soy products, beans, cucumber, radishes and brussels sprouts.
- ❖ **Ileostomy:** eggs, cabbage, broccoli, onions and beans.

- ❖ **Drinks:** that can cause flatus, all carbonated drinks, sparkling wine and milk.
- ❖ **Check the fit of your bag:** if your bag / pouch is not adhered around your stoma properly it can leak air, odour and even stool contents. With a properly fitted bag, the only time you should smell anything is during the bag / pouch change.

Questions often asked from ostomists:

Question: Can the use of mint tea reduce ballooning?

Answer: Yes, mint tea does work and reduces / removes flatulence which basically one of the things that can cause ballooning. Mint tea helps with flatus (gas & bloating), primarily due to its antispasmodic & carminative properties.

Question: Can eating regularly help reduce flatus?

Answer: Yes. Try not to skip meals as doing so can aggravate your small intestine and cause even more flatulence.

Question: How do I avoid swallowing excess air?

Answer: Avoid drinking with meals (take sips) and avoid chewing gum.

Question: I experience frequent ballooning – help?

Answer: Try using support pants / briefs or hernia support belt to help conceal the ballooning.

Question: How do I release flatus from my stoma bag?

Answer:

- ❖ **Drainable pouches** – open the outlet end of the bag and gently press bag to release the flatus. You can also try tilting the bag upwards whilst releasing the air, similar to burping a baby, to help direct the air towards the outlet. Then close the outlet of the bag securely after releasing the air.
- ❖ **Two-piece system** – detach the pouch from the flange/ baseplate (the adhesive baseplate to your abdomen) and gently release the air from the open end of the pouch. Then release the air from the open end of the pouch. Then reattach the pouch / bag to the flange / baseplate.
- ❖ **Closed bags:** - if the air filter is blocked, the bag may balloon and require changing.

RESOLUTIONS

A Poem by Bernie Fisherman

Another year has slipped away
Gone with the wind day by day
New projects and adventures to happily arrange
Old habits begone, things to change
New resolutions come to mind thick and fast
It's the future that matters, farewell to the past
Like clouds scudding across the sky
New resolutions are born but swiftly die
To remember the past is to visit regret
To think of the future is filled with fear
So, resolve to live joyously and live for today
Fill it with hope and love and resounding good cheer
Maybe I'll climb that mountain, perhaps I'll write a story
Maybe I'll perform on the penny whistle
At the Royal Albert Hall and fill the place with glory
Whatever I do whether new or old
The resolutions I decide upon
Will be exciting, adventurous and bold





HEALTH

The three Ks of gut health

What are kefir, kimchi and kombucha, and which is best for you? By *Rosamund Dean*

There are about 100 trillion microbes in our digestive tract. These tiny organisms include bacteria, fungi and viruses. Collectively, they form the gut microbiome — a powerful system influencing everything from our immune response to skin health, mood, energy and sleep.

According to the latest thinking, the balance of good and bad bacteria in the gut microbiome must be just right. Imbalances have been linked to inflammation, insulin

resistance, obesity, irritable bowel syndrome and colorectal cancer. How to keep things in harmony? Enter kefir, kimchi and kombucha. These trendy fermented foods are beloved of Instagram’s “well” set. And they’re on to something: all three contain probiotics — live microbes — that are vital for maintaining gut health.

They’re not just a trend: humans have been eating fermented foods for centuries. Fermentation is natural process, caused by bacteria and yeasts, that turns carbohydrates and sugars into alcohols, acids and gases. It was an effective



Kefir

way to preserve food before refrigeration but modern mass food production has diluted some of its benefits. In 2021 researchers from King’s College London tested fermented food

products from UK supermarkets — including kefir, kombucha and kimchi — and found that a third contained additives that affected their nutritional value.

So how can you tell if the fermented foods you’re buying are the real thing? How can you incorporate them into your diet? And which comes out on top? This is your guide to the “K” superfoods.

Kefir

A versatile food — and drink — kefir is made by adding living colonies of yeast and bacteria to milk, which converts it into a powerful probiotic. You can buy

kefir drinks or thicker kefir for dolloping onto your muesli.

“Kefir is the cousin to yoghurt, with a creamy texture and lots of live microbes,” says Dr Megan Rossi, a dietician with a PhD in gut health and the founder of the probiotic supplements brand Smart Strains. “The millions of microbes that live together in the kefir grains thrive on lactose [milk sugar] and make organic acids, which gives kefir that refreshing bubble and slight sourness.”

This fermentation process is linked to benefits such as lower blood pressure and reduces



Kimchi

kefir’s lactose content, meaning it can be OK for those with a lactose intolerance, if the amount is minimal.

You can also buy drinks made with water kefir, which are a great alternative to sugary soft drinks, although not as high

“Many commercial versions cut corners. Some rely on ultra-processed sweeteners”

in good bacteria as milk kefir. Rossi warns that not all kefir is made equally. “To get the real deal, check the label for added sugars or emulsifiers and thickeners,” she says. “These go against the gut-loving principles for which kefir is known.”

Kimchi

It’s often spoken of in the same breath as sauerkraut (which is sometimes shortened to kraut and known as the fourth “K” superfood), but kimchi has the edge over sauerkraut because it contains a greater variety of nutrients and probiotics. Sauerkraut tends to be made from fermented cabbage alone, whereas kimchi can include cabbage, radish, carrot, spring onion and seasoning such as chilli, garlic and ginger.

“Kimchi was included in a study at Stanford University that found fermented foods help to increase gut diversity and reduce inflammation in the body,” Rossi says.

Inflammation has been linked to rheumatoid arthritis, type 2 diabetes and chronic stress. Rossi adds that traditional



Kombucha

kimchi is also packed with prebiotics and fibre. But watch out for the salt content. “While the vegetables in kimchi help counterbalance the effects, excessive salt intake over time can contribute to high blood pressure,” she says.

Kombucha

Made by fermenting tea leaves, kombucha is known as a gut-friendly drink for good reason. “Traditional kombucha is rich in organic acids and antioxidant polyphenols,” Rossi says, but the emphasis is on the word “traditional”.

“Many commercial versions cut corners,” she warns. “Some add vinegar to mimic the tangy

bite of proper fermentation, while others claim to be sugar-free and instead rely on ultra-processed sweeteners. You need sugar to make traditional kombucha, but the microbes ‘eat’ most of it, meaning the final product is typically low in sugar.”

This is why you might see sugar high up on the ingredients list on traditional kombucha, but the nutritional content chart will show 0 per cent sugar. Drinking it instead of alcohol or a sweet soft drink is definitely a healthier choice.

So, kefir, kimchi or kombucha — which comes out on top?

The boring answer is that since variety is good for gut health, all three are worth including in your diet. Remember to check labels for additives and try other fermented foods such as miso and sauerkraut. Don’t forget that cheese and bog-standard natural yoghurt are fermented too.

Other ways to nourish your gut include not eating too late at night, keeping things moving by drinking plenty of water and supporting nutrient absorption by chewing your food well.

Most importantly, eat a variety of vegetables to get a mix of nutrients. The more interesting your diet, the happier your gut microbiome will be ■

Your gut will also thank you for eating these



Oily fish

A diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids is linked to a more diverse gut microbiome. Try two servings a week of salmon, sardines or mackerel.



Garlic

Garlic is packed with prebiotic fibre, which is what the good bacteria in your gut needs to feed on to flourish.



Miso

The fermented soybean paste is full of gut-friendly live bacteria. Buy an unpasteurised version to get the probiotic benefits.



Dark berries

The polyphenols (plant compounds) in blackberries, blueberries and blackcurrants are good for beneficial gut bacteria and inhibit the growth of bad bacteria.



Legumes

Chickpeas, lentils and other legumes contain prebiotic fibre that feeds good gut bacteria. Aim for at least one serving a day.



STOMA OPEN INFORMATION DAY

We hope you find this day useful and informative. It is aimed at all ostomists and their families. We hope that the exhibition will keep you up to date with new appliances and accessories which can aid you and or improve your quality of life. The aim of the speakers is to share stoma care knowledge. We hope you will be able to join us.

Saturday 20th of June 2026

**CENTRAL MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL
ACTION LANE, LONDON N10 7NS
IN THE ACAD SQUARE**

Doors Open at 10:00am





COFFEE MORNINGS 2026

Date	Venue	Company	Speaker
January 7 th	Masonic Hall	Eakin Healthcare	Niki
January 21 st	“	Salts	Shelly
February 4 th	“	CUI	Karly
February 18 th	“	Convatec	Sam
March 4 th	“	Rapid Care	Michele
March 18 th	“	Coloplast	Carol
April 1 st	“	Salts	Shelly
April 15 th	“	B Braun	Tony
April 29 th	“	Parasol Counselling/ Clinimed	Carrie / Paul
May 13 th	“	Convatec	Sam
May 27 th	“	Hollister	Laura
June 10 th	“	Sportx	Maria
June 24 th	“	Dansac	Bobby
July 8 th	“	CUI	Karly
Summer Holiday Break			
September 9 th	“	Coloplast	Carol
September 23 rd	“	Salts	Shelly
October 7 th	“	B Braun	Tony
October 21 st	“	Sportx	Maria
November 4 th	“	Eakin Healthcare	Niki
November 18 th	“	Rapid Care	Michele
December 2 nd	“	Hollister/Dansac	Laura/Bobby
December 16 th	“	AGM	Christmas Party

A Link to Zoom meeting for those of you who are unable to be with us at our coffee mornings in person. Once you have established contact on zoom it will ask you for a ID number for the meeting. Email: chairperson.iossg@hotmail.com for the code to be sent to you.

Everyone is more than welcome to come along to our meetings which are held every other Wednesday at the Masonic Hall, Northwick Park Circle, Kenton HA3 0EL 10:00 am till Mid-Day.

Want to join our Support Group?

If you have a colostomy, ileostomy or urostomy and you would like more information, please complete the section below and send to: SobŸa Shah, Secretary, 54 Ormesby Way, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 9SF

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Newsletter: Please confirm below how you would prefer to receive the *Inside Out* newsletter.

1. Electronically via the email address entered above

2. By post to the address entered above

3. I do not wish to receive a newsletter.

Important information:

Annual membership subscription: £5.00, please make cheques payable to: St. Mark's Foundation / Account 101 / or set up a standing order.

Send to: Ms SobŸa Shah, 54, Ormesby Way, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 9SF

Or Email to: SobŸa_shah@hotmail.com



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Deborah



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Stoma Care (generic Email)	LNWH-tr.stomacare@nhs.net
Pouch Care (answer phone)	020 8453 2099
Gladstone Ward CMH	020 8453 2027

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Community Stoma Care Nurses for Brent Ealing & Harrow

Freephone telephone service to the weekends and creating an online information hub. Mon to Fri 08:30am to 17:00pm 0800 3761 310 and at the weekend On-Call Nurse Line Sat – Sun & Bank Holidays 09:00am to 13:30pm 0800 592 202. You can join at any time either by using those numbers or www.securestart.co.uk



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