

Beat the bloat

Feeling puffy? Bloating caused by wind, irregularity, or water retention can make even a tiny tummy become anything but. Try these tips from Toni Green.

Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*)

Its sedative, anti-inflammatory and antispasmodic properties make this an excellent choice for digestive problems, especially those caused or worsened by stress, such as nausea, motion sickness, heartburn, nervous stomach, or irritable bowel syndrome. Chamomile marries well with peppermint, as both work to relax the muscles of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, thereby releasing the wind that causes the stomach to bloat. A cup of chamomile tea after a big meal is the perfect antidote for indigestion.

St Mary's thistle (*Silybum marianum*)

A powerful antioxidant, this protects the body from the harmful effects of free radicals and lipid peroxidation. St Mary's thistle also increases the body's production of glutathione, an antioxidant compound required for detoxification, and increases bile production which in turn boosts removal of toxins from the liver. It also increases digestive enzyme formation, while simultaneously reducing gut inflammation and soothing the mucous membranes of the GI tract.

Senna (*Cassia angustifolia*)

Senna is rich in anthroquinones, compounds that work as a stimulant laxative, first increasing the amount of water and electrolytes in the intestine and increasing peristalsis (intestinal muscle contractions), a two-part process that accelerates stool expulsion while

also – unlike conventional laxatives – strengthening bowel wall muscle. Senna stimulates bile production, enhancing detoxification, and works quickly, within three to nine hours. Caution: No herbal laxative should be taken for more than seven consecutive days.

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

The seeds of this herb are a powerful carminative, meaning they expel intestinal wind, making them an excellent choice for relieving bloating, as well as the abdominal pain and cramping associated with more severe digestive problems, such as irritable bowel syndrome. Fennel's rich volatile oils are responsible for its potent antispasmodic and anti-inflammatory properties, working to relax intestinal walls so that trapped wind can dissipate, and reducing the chances of toxic gas compounds accumulating to the point of causing embarrassing and painful flatulence.

Gentian (*Gentiana lutea*)

Bitter tonic herbs like gentian have long been used to increase production of digestive juices, which improves a range of gut problems, from heartburn through to vomiting, constipation, diarrhoea, and stomach-ache. They are particularly helpful for indigestion and bloating, and possibly food allergies and intolerances, as they increase the body's capacity to break down food so it may be correctly absorbed. Ideally, take bitter herbs like gentian before a meal, as this will increase production of saliva, stomach acids, and bile – a dosage of 20 drops of root tincture in a little water 30 minutes prior to eating is recommended. ❄️

✿ D-I-Y with Toni: After- dinner tea

Place 2 teaspoons of fennel seeds, 1 tablespoon each of dried chamomile and peppermint, and 2 slices of peeled, finely chopped ginger into a teapot. Pour over 2 cups of boiling water, and steep for five minutes. Strain, and sweeten with honey if desired.

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