Help - My stomach rumbles and grumbles to no end

Dear Alice,

I have a rather embarrassing situation in that my stomach is constantly making noises that are unbecoming. This proves to be more than embarrassing during meetings and interviews and I'm constantly trying to hide or 'cover up' these noises with coughs and other distractions. This seems to be most common in the mornings, whether or not I have eaten anything. Sometimes it even sounds like flatulence. Is there anything I can do or take to help minimize this terribly embarrassing condition?

Answer

Dear Reader,

The rumbling, grumbling, or tinkling sounds that you are noticing are made by the bubbling and gurgling of air pockets and fluid moving through your intestine. These noises, common among many people, occur when one is hungry, because the body is readying itself to receive food by moving air and fluids in the stomach and intestine out of the way (down towards the rectum). These sounds also occur during the process of digestion, as the contents of the meal are processed and moved through the stomach, small intestine, and large intestine.

The fancy, 50-cent name for this phenomenon is "borborygmi," a great word that sounds similar to the intestinal noise itself. For some reason, your intestine is particularly active in the morning, kicking off a cacophony of borborygmi.

You may want to experiment with some changes in your eating patterns to see if you can encourage your digestive system to quiet down. If you keep a journal of your foods, recording what and when you eat and drink, and how enthusiastic your borborygmi sound, you may be able to see a connection. For example:

- Cut back on caffeine, alcohol, and/or dairy products? all common culprits of digestive ills.
- If you are a smoker, go without a cigarette to see if that has any effect.
- Eat many smaller meals in a day, rather than either going hungry or eating 2 or 3 larger meals.

Make only one change in your eating/drinking patterns, repeat it for a couple of days, and then jot down whether your borborygmi stay the same, increase in volume, or calm down in response to that change. Then go on to try another. With luck and patience, you may hit upon
the right mix of factors to calm the borborygmi beast within.

Alice!
Category:
General Health [2]
Stomach & Other Gastrointestinal Grumblings [3]

Related questions

Gas, bloating, fiber? [4]
Food's travels through the body [5]
Will probiotic-enriched yogurt aid digestion? [6]

Published date:
Dec 19, 2003
Last reviewed on:
May 08, 2015

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/help-my-stomach-rumbles-and-grumbles-no-end#comment-0

Links