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A MASSAGE THERAPIST EXPLAINS WHY YOUR STOMACH MAKES WEIRD NOISES DURING TREATMENTS



PIN IT

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One of the best parts of getting a massage (aside from, you know, the actual massage) is unwinding and letting your worries dissolve into the ether. So the most recent time I treated myself to one, I slipped out of my clothes and onto the table, laying my head down with an exciting anticipation for my hour of relaxation.

And then things got awkward. As in: My stomach would not shut up. Seriously—like clockwork, just when things got quiet and the massage therapist started on my back, my gut began to make embarrassing noises that almost even sounded like I was passing gas. Ugh.

I found out it's a thing, though, that no one tells you about getting massages: They can make your tummy chatty. Like, aggressively chatty and loud. Instead of spending the rest of your session contemplating if you should apologize, Ericka Clinton, BS, LMT, and dean of massage therapy at the Swedish Institute says you should just relax—because it happens to nearly everyone.

“When I hear the belly rumbling, I smile because I think I’m doing my job,” says Clinton. “As well-trained massage therapists, we’re prepared for anything, and we know that once you get relaxed you may have digestive processes occurring—belly rumbling, gas—that will happen.”

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Essentially, it's because all of that pressure stimulates things inside your body. Clinton explains that massage triggers your parasympathetic nervous system especially, AKA the system in charge of rest and digestion.

“When you’re in fight or flight mode, your body doesn’t care about digesting anything,” she explains, which is why your stomach’s not making weird noises when stressed at work or mid-workout. “But when you’re relaxed, your digestive system starts to really break down the food that you’ve ingested, and obviously, depending on what you’ve eaten, sometimes you also have movement of gas through your digestive track and through your intestine.”

Then there are some massages that actually focus on the abdomen to *intentionally* get things moving, relieving issues like constipation. **Internist and gastroenterologist Niket Sonpal MD** adds that massaging spots like your lower back can also further stimulate digestion, too. “The pressure on our backs and lower backs causes the small and large intestines to become compressed,” he tells me. “This stimulates them to move

what's inside forward, which is poop and gas." He quotes Shrek: "Better out than in." Well, fair.

While gas is a normal and an expected response to massage, there are a few steps you can take so it doesn't become *too* embarrassing. Clinton says to avoid any foods that you know will upset your stomach or give you acid reflux, as those may make you burp or feel nauseous. Dr. Sonpal advises to avoid any high-fiber foods along with the usual gassy culprits: carbonated beverages, cauliflower, broccoli, and legumes.

Both also recommend that you give yourself time between eating a meal and going to your appointment. "Eating lightly one to two hours beforehand will allow for digestion while not making you feel uncomfortably full," says Dr. Sonpal. "Being full means more digestion and more tummy grumbles." And, because you'll spend a good chunk of the massage on your stomach, Clinton says having someone push down on you while you're full will not feel good anyways. On the flipside, make sure not to go in on an empty stomach, which can make you feel dizzy or lightheaded.

Regardless, I'm just glad I'm not the only one who's dealing with massages in which my stomach tries to compete with the new age music.

This massage tool is *perfect* for releasing jaw tension which, weirdly, could be the culprit of cheek and jawline acne.

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