

Bloated and *baffled*?

Let's unpack the pressure — why bloating happens, what the research actually shows, and what helps.

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What is abdominal bloating?

Bloating is the feeling of tightness, pressure or fullness in your belly — sometimes with visible swelling, called distension. It can come and go, or stick around for longer stretches. It affects up to 30% of adults, and often arrives with changes in bowel habit, mild pain, or gas.

Why does bloating happen?

Digestive mechanics

Gas accumulation, altered motility, and increased sensitivity to normal gas volumes.

Gut microbiome

Dysbiosis — imbalance in gut bacteria — can increase gas production during food fermentation.

Dietary triggers

Fermentable foods (FODMAPs), high fibre, carbonated drinks and some artificial sweeteners.

Gut sensitivity

Visceral hypersensitivity means normal gas volumes feel more uncomfortable than they should.

Stress and mood

Stress activates the threat system, which slows digestion and increases pain perception.

What the research shows

Bloating is real and measurable — objective studies show increased abdominal circumference and gas volume, and brain imaging shows altered pain processing.

How is it treated?

- Diet changes — low FODMAP approaches, identifying personal triggers, gradual fibre increase.
- Gut-targeted medications — prokinetics, antispasmodics and neuromodulators can help restore normal function.
- Microbiome support — specific probiotics, prebiotics and dietary fibre.
- Mind-body tools — breathing practices, meditation and somatic approaches that down-regulate the threat system.

Microstep — one small action to start today

Breathe — three minutes of 4-4-4 breathing (in for four, hold for four, out for four). **Track** — keep a simple food and symptom log to find your personal triggers. **Notice** — write down three moments today when you felt calm in your body, however small.

Bloating is real and treatable. The discomfort you feel is valid. Your body is not broken — it is dysregulated, and regulation can be rebuilt.

NEED SUPPORT?

Questions? consultant@sarahanticich.co.nz · executiveframe.co.nz — and bring this sheet to your next appointment if you would like to talk it through.

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