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Summary

LARGE QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY IDENTIFYING POSITIVE PREDICTORS FOR INTESTINAL METHANOGEN OVERGROWTH

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Colorectal

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A questionnaire study of 731 patients who underwent lactulose breath testing found that intestinal methanogen overgrowth is associated with constipation and fatty or floating stools, and inversely associated with diarrhea and inflammatory bowel disease.

KEY POINTS

- 232 of 731 patients tested positive for intestinal methanogen overgrowth, defined as breath methane concentration of 10 ppm or greater on lactulose hydrogen and methane breath testing.
- Methane positivity was significantly associated with constipation ($P < 0.001$) and inversely associated with diarrhea ($P = 0.002$).
- 75% of patients with intestinal methanogen overgrowth reported stools that appear fatty or greasy and tend to float, a statistically significant association ($P < 0.001$).
- Among 22 patients with inflammatory bowel disease in the cohort, 91% tested negative for methane ($P = 0.020$), suggesting an inverse association between methanogen overgrowth and inflammatory bowel disease.
- The authors conclude that hydrogen and methane breath testing plays an important role in identifying intestinal methanogen overgrowth in patients with constipation.

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