



## Strange Gases

You see and interact with gases on a daily basis, even if you don't realise it at the time. There are loads of cool gases around us. Some of them make our lives easier, some of them help us get through difficult times, and some are just funny. Let's dig a little deeper into some of the most interesting.

### Anaesthesia

If you ever have an operation or are suffering from pain in hospital, they might give you anaesthetics. Sometimes this is an injection, but it can also be given as a gas. There are lots of different gases that can be used for this purpose. They all make you go to sleep for a while, whilst the surgeon operates or they help to numb the pain until you recover.

### Flatulence

That's right, your bottom burps are a type of gas as well. When you let a sneaky one out, you are actually releasing hydrogen, carbon dioxide, methane and hydrogen sulfide! These all combine to make up the distinctive odour!

### Carbon Dioxide

Carbon dioxide isn't just a result of your flatulence. It is also the gas that makes fizzy drinks fizzy. It is also used to keep refrigerators cool and in some fire extinguishers. Unfortunately, carbon dioxide is also one of the biggest problems with climate change. It traps heat from the sun, and human activity has increased the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere considerably. This means that more heat than ever is being trapped. This isn't a good thing for us or our planet.

### Carbon Monoxide

Carbon dioxide is made up of one carbon molecule and two oxygen molecules (di- means two). Carbon monoxide only has one oxygen molecule. This changes how it works completely. While carbon dioxide is useful in some ways, carbon monoxide is deadly. You will probably have a carbon monoxide detector in your house. This will let you know if there is any near you.



## Fluorescent Lights

Those long light bulbs that you've seen at school or the neon flashing lights you might have seen in films are all powered by different gases. Neon is a type of gas that gives them their name, but they aren't all powered by neon. They might also contain argon, xenon, krypton or mercury. The mix of gases will give them a different colour.

## Helium

Most people will be familiar with helium. It is much lighter than the gases in the air, so anything filled with helium is more likely to float away. The most common use for this is in birthday balloons. The balloons are light enough that helium makes them float and bob around on a string. For the record, some professionals have calculated that it would have taken at least 105,000 helium balloons to lift the house in the movie *Up!*

### RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Which type of gas helps if you are in pain?
2. Which gases give flatulence their smell?
3. Which gas is deadly?
4. Give one beneficial use for carbon dioxide.
5. Which gas was used in the film *Up!*?

### VIPERS QUESTIONS

**V**

Which word in the first paragraph means "connect with"?

**V**

Find a synonym in the text for "smell".

**S**

What is the difference between carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide?

**S**

Why is carbon dioxide bad for the environment?

**P**

Which of these gases do you think would be most useful to keep using? Why?