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What Causes Hiccups: 5 Reasons You Have Hiccups and What to Do About It

We've all had hiccups—the involuntary contractions of the diaphragm muscle—and they're both annoying and embarrassing, especially when they go on for an extended period. Here's what causes hiccups so you can work on preventing them.

BY SHARON FEIEREISEN 12/08/2017

Eating too fast

Hiccups (medical term: singultus) are a very common condition that almost always resolves in a few minutes to a few hours—but if you need a little help getting rid of them, here are nine easy tricks for curing the hiccups. According to Marc Wishingrad MD, a gastroenterologist in Santa Monica, "The main cause is usually related to eating—either too fast, too much, or too irritating (spicy foods or foods that are too hot or cold)," says Dr. Wishingrad. "Prevention, essentially, is learning to eat slowly and not over-indulge. Not easy!"

Bad habits

Drinking alcohol and smoking aren't only bad habits, they can often cause hiccups according to family medicine Mikhail Varshavski, FM, (aka Doctor Mike).

Your emotional state

According to Doctor Mike emotional stress—or excitement—can lead to hiccups. When you feel that adrenaline start to pump or your heart rate rise, remember to breathe!

GERD

Hiccups can also be related to the very common condition called GERD (gastro-esophageal reflux disease). "GERD hiccups can be a vicious cycle, with GERD leading to hiccups and hiccups making GERD worse," explains Dr. Wishingrad. Hiccups can, in fact, sometimes say a lot about your health.

Surgery

According to **South Florida cardiologist Adam Splaver, MD**, in some cases, abdominal surgery can cause hiccups as well as tumors of the belly or central nervous system (these are typically intractable) or strokes. "If your symptoms do not abate within several hours it's always good advice to see your doctor."

Hiccups that last more than 48 hours

These are defined as persistent hiccups and a doctor should always be consulted. "Causes can include the aforementioned GERD, medication side effects, neurological diseases, as well as various infections, as well as cancer, though the latter is rare," says Dr. Wishingrad.

Medical treatment

If you're looking for a quick fix, there are some hiccup remedies. If, however, you have persistent hiccups, Dr. Wishingrad says treatments include acid blocking medication, as well as medications that affect the nervous system, such as thorazine, baclofen, and neurontin. "There are minor surgical procedures (such as nerve blocks) that can be done if medication doesn't work."

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