



## Hiccups



### Overview

We've all had hiccups. They can be funny, and aren't usually a sign of anything serious. But what causes them? Why do we get hiccups, and how can we get rid of them?

### What is a hiccup?

A hiccup is a spasm of a muscle we call the "diaphragm." It separates your chest from your abdomen. It contracts to pull air into your lungs, and relaxes to push air back out. When you hiccup, your diaphragm suddenly contracts by itself. At the same time, your vocal cords close quickly. That's what makes a hiccup's sound.

### Common causes

Commonly, hiccups are caused by things like eating too much or too quickly, especially if you gulp air when you eat or drink. Alcohol and carbonated drinks can cause them. So can hot and spicy foods and drinks. Hiccups can be triggered by excitement or stress. And, a sudden temperature change can cause them.

### Other causes

Less commonly, hiccups are caused by nerve irritation, a central nervous system disorder, a tumor or some other serious issue.

### Treatment and Prevention

Hiccups usually go away on their own in a few minutes. For some people, it helps to breathe into a paper bag, hold your breath, or sip cold water. If your hiccups last for more than two days, something may be wrong. Your doctor can examine you to find the cause of your hiccups.

