

## Hiccups

### WHAT ARE HICCUPS?

Generally, hiccups only last a few minutes and are totally harmless. These are called **benign hiccups**. We all get them, even foetuses and other mammals.

There are several types of hiccups, for example **persistent hiccups** last more than 48 hours and **refractory hiccups** last more than 1 month. **Chronic hiccups** can continue for several months or even several years. The record is held by Charles Osborne, who had hiccups for 68 years!

### WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?

The causes of hiccups are similar to those of burping. They can be triggered by the consumption of **fizzy drinks**, an excessively **large meal**, **eating too quickly** or **swallowing air** while eating.

All of these things cause **gastric distension** or stretching of the stomach. This distension irritates the diaphragm, which is located beside the stomach. As a result, air has trouble getting into the trachea and lungs. This triggers a vibration in the vocal cords and the epiglottis.

The medical term used for hiccups is **diaphragmatic myoclonus**. 'Myo' from muscle, and clonus is a short, involuntary jerk and diaphragmatic is related to the diaphragm, so this literally means '**short, involuntary muscle jerk of the diaphragm**'.

#### Keywords >

**diaphragmatic myoclonus**

**'myo': muscle**

**'clonus': short, involuntary jerk**

**'diaphragmatic': related to the diaphragm**

## 4.4.4 Hiccups

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Hiccups are harmless.

- True
- False

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All mammals can get hiccups.

- True
- False

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Even a foetus in the womb can have hiccups.

- True
- False

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Persistent hiccups can last longer than...

- 1 hour
- 24 hours
- 48 hours

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Refractory hiccups last longer than...

- 3 days
- 2 weeks
- 1 month

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What are hiccups called when they last several months or more?

- Too many hiccups
- Chronic hiccups
- Recurring hiccups

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Charles Osborne holds the record for the longest bout of hiccups. How long did they last?

- 47 years
- 56 years
- 68 years

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Hiccups can be caused by eating a meal too quickly.

- True
- False

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What do we call a distension of the stomach that causes hiccups?

- Gastric distension
- Gastric expansion
- A gastric bug

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Gastric distension can irritate...

- the liver
- the diaphragm
- the oesophagus

## Answers

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Hiccups are harmless.

- True**  
*Well done! That's right.*
- False**  
*Wrong! Hiccups are completely harmless.*

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All mammals can get hiccups.

- True**  
*Well done! That's right.*
- False**  
*Wrong! That's not the right answer.*

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Even a foetus in the womb can have hiccups.

- True**  
*Well done! That's right.*
- False**  
*Wrong! A foetus can have hiccups.*

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Persistent hiccups can last longer than...

- 1 hour**  
*Wrong! It's a lot more.*
- 24 hours**  
*Wrong! It's more than that.*
- 48 hours**  
*Well done! That's right!*

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Refractory hiccups last longer than...

- 3 days**  
*Wrong! It's a lot more.*
- 2 weeks**  
*Wrong! It's more than that.*
- 1 month**  
*Well done! That's right!*

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What are hiccups called when they last several months or more?

- Too many hiccups**  
*Wrong! Nice try, though.*
- Chronic hiccups**  
*Well done! That's right.*
- Recurring hiccups**  
*Wrong! That's not the right answer.*

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Charles Osborne holds the record for the longest bout of hiccups. How long did they last?

- 47 years**  
*Wrong! It's a lot more.*
- 56 years**  
*Wrong! It's more than that.*
- 68 years**  
*Well done! That's right!*

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Hiccups can be caused by eating a meal too quickly.

- True**  
*Well done! Eating a meal too quickly causes the stomach to stretch and this modifies the journey air makes in the respiratory tract.*
- False**  
*Wrong! Too bad, that's not the right answer.*

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What do we call a distension of the stomach that causes hiccups?

- Gastric distension**  
*Well done! That's right.*
- Gastric expansion**  
*Wrong! That's not right.*
- A gastric bug**  
*Wrong! Nice try, though!*

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Gastric distension can irritate...

- the liver**  
*Wrong! Try again!*
- the diaphragm**  
*Well done! It modifies the journey air makes in your respiratory tract.*
- the oesophagus**  
*Wrong! That's not right.*