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The 19 Cures for Hiccups – and Which Hiccup Cures Work Best

Dr. Fab Mancini | August 21st, 2017

Though hiccups are generally harmless and usually go away in a few minutes, they can be incredibly frustrating. No one knows exactly what brings them on, why they occur nor, to everyone's chagrin, how to get rid of them.

What exactly is a hiccup? A hiccup is a spasm (or an involuntary contraction) of your diaphragm, a muscle at the base of your lungs that helps with breathing. The spasm causes your vocal cords to quickly close, which is where the “hiccup” sound comes from.

Though hiccups can occur completely without notice, they're more likely to occur while:

- Eating a big meal (or one with spicy foods)
- Drinking carbonated beverages
- Smoking
- Drinking excessively
- Feeling stressed out or excited

So How do You Get Rid of Hiccups?

The burning question on most everyone's mind when it comes to hiccups is how to get rid of them. And while there is no tried-and-true proven method out there, just about everyone has a favourite remedy that they swear by.

Following is a compilation of possible hiccup cures. Some are hearsay, others folklore, while others have actually been published in medical journals – and all are fair game when it comes to battling hiccups.

1. Eat a teaspoon of granulated sugar. This was actually published in 1971 in the New England Journal of Medicine as a way to relieve hiccups. Some variations also include drinking a glass of water (without stopping to take any breaths in between) after eating the sugar.

2. Using a cotton swab, tickle the roof of your mouth where the hard and soft palate meet. This (along with number 3 and 9) was published in 1985 in the Journal of Clinical Gastroenterology as a potential hiccup cure.

3. Gargle with cold water.

4. Hold your breath.

5. Eat a piece of dry bread.

6. **Suck on a lemon wedge** that's been soaked in bitters.
7. **Compress your chest** by either leaning forward or bringing your knees up.
8. **Lift your vulva** (the hanging sack at the back of your mouth) with a spoon.
9. **Pull on your tongue**
10. **Drink a glass of water upside down.** (This is achieved by holding the glass upright, curling your lips around the edge of the glass and tilting your head over.) This is the remedy that Richard McCallum, M.D., professor of the medicine and chief of the Gastroenterology Division at the University of Virginia Health Sciences Center, uses. "I cure my hiccups by filling a glass of water, bending over forward, and drinking the water upside down," he says. "That always works and I firmly recommend it for my normally healthy patients."
11. **Hold your breath and swallow.** "Hold your breath for as long as possible and swallow at the time you feel the hiccup sensation coming," says Betty Shaver, a lecturer on herbal and other home remedies at the New Age Health Spa in Neversink, New York. "Do that two or three times, then take a deep breath and repeat again. That should do it."
12. **Have someone startle you.**
13. **Blow in and out of a brown paper bag.**
14. **Stand in the doorway, stretch your arms over your head to reach the doorframe and lean forward.** Many people swear by this method and, though no scientific studies confirm it, say this is the most effective method.
15. **Eat a spoonful of peanut butter.**
16. **Gently tap the center of your forehead, above your nose.**
17. **Pinch the skin of your hand between your thumb and index finger.**
18. **Stick your fingers in your ears.** This reportedly works by stimulating branches of the vagus nerve (which connects the brain to the abdomen and plays a role in controlling hiccups) and distracting it with this other sensation.
19. **Count backwards from 100.** This helps distract you from the hiccups.

If it seems your hiccups just won't go away, remember that everything's relative – the longest bout of hiccups ever recorded lasted for six decades! (And take comfort in the fact that most people hiccup about 4 to 60 times in a minute for just a few minutes.)