

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