



## Hiccups - What causes Hiccups?

### Fact

- Hiccups happen when the diaphragm, a big sheet of muscle that goes across your chest under your lungs, doesn't work properly.
- When the diaphragm muscle tightens it gets smaller and squashes your lung cavity, which pushes air up and out of your lungs and you breathe out. When the diaphragm relaxes and goes loose your lung cavity increases in size and your lungs inflate with air sucked down into them and you breathe in.
- Sometimes the diaphragm goes into a spasm and air is sucked in quickly.
- The brain detects this and sends a message to the throat muscles to quickly close off our throat so no more air can be sucked in.
- The sound of air rushing in and quickly being stopped is the sound of a hiccup.
- Nobody really knows what causes hiccups so it's hard to come up with a cure.

### Do you know

- There is a world record for the person who had the hiccups the longest. He was a pig farmer in America and he had the hiccups from 1922 to 1987. That's 65 years!
- Your diaphragm is a bit like an umbrella! It's shaped like a dome, water can't get through it, and when it closes the outer edges go down and the centre goes up - just like an umbrella.
- Your diaphragm is made up of muscles and tendons.

### Experiments you can do

Next time you have the hiccups see if any of the following cures work for you.

Drinking a lot of water fast.

Drinking water from the wrong side of the glass.

Eating crushed ice.

Getting a big fright.

Hold your breath for as long as possible.

### Other Investigations

Put your hands on your tummy just under your rib cage and take some big deep breaths. Can you feel your tummy moving as the air is sucked into your lungs? When that happens your diaphragm is relaxing and stretching and moving down in your body. When you breath out your diaphragm is tightening contracting and moving up in you body.

### Jokes

What do you call a hitchhiker who has the hiccups? A hic-hiker.

From Rochelle Seagar