

# Chuckle n'Chat

WHY IS BELLY BUTTON  
(NAVEL) A POTENTIAL  
HEALTH DETECTOR?

HOW TO GET RID  
OF HICCUPS

*Surprising Things Sense  
of Smell Reveals About  
Your Health*

Understanding the Side  
Effects of Sleeping Pills



Easter edition 2023

# Contents

<b>Did You Know?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Health Watch</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Body Language</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Pharmacy in Action</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Chuckles</b>	<b>31</b>



# editor's comment



## Dear Readers

In light of the recent Covid-19 variant outbreak in China, it is accurate to say that the pandemic is not yet over. The rest of the World continues to battle new emerging CH.1.1 and XBB.1.5 variants, both of which are from the Omicron family. The Omicron subvariant XBB.1.5 may be more likely to infect people who have been vaccinated or already had Covid-19.

Omicron blew through with such strength, that it may have left wide immunity in its wake. Because variants seem to be staying in the Omicron family, that may signal optimism. Whether we'll have an XBB.1.5 wave (and if yes, how big) will depend on many factors including immunity of the population, and people's actions.

Getting the Covid-19 vaccine including the booster is still the best way to protect yourself from hospitalisation. For those keeping watch, it is far from forgotten as deaths and infections continue to mount at a lower but steady pace.

If you are infected you must take the necessary steps to avoid spreading it further. First and foremost, recognise the symptoms that include:- runny nose, headache, fatigue (mild or severe), sneezing and sore throat and other symptoms which your doctor can advise. Vaccines and treatments have dramatically reduced severe illness, and mask

requirements have mostly turned to personal preference.

Do not let your guard down. Continue to wear a well-fitted mask and maintain social distancing when in enclosed places, follow proper hand washing as these are the essential measures you should continue to take. The vulnerable in society continues to be at a huge risk of severe illness. If the next variant is a descendant of the Omicron lineage, I would suspect that all these people who just got infected will have some protection.

On another note, MASCA now has a Managed Care department. You may consult our Mr Collet Sibanda who is a qualified nurse and clinician on the Ground floor if you require local or foreign surgery in due course to assess shortfalls by a Specialist are necessary. The main purpose of this department is to better serve the members by focusing on prevention and care management, which helps produce better patient outcomes and healthier lives. Managed care also helps control costs so you can save money.

The Management and Staff of MASCA, join me in sending you all, Our Members, Member Firms and Health Service Providers, a wonderful Easter weekend!

Au revoir until next time

Maria

PLEASE NOTE!  
WHILE EVERY REASONABLE PRECAUTION HAS BEEN TAKEN TO ENSURE THE ACCURACY OF THE ADVICE AND INFORMATION GIVEN TO READERS, NEITHER THE EDITOR, MASCA OR THE PUBLISHERS CAN ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ARTICLES THAT HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED FOR PUBLICATION.

# Did You Know?

## Cool and strange facts about the human body a lot of people don't know



### We take in half a litre of air with each breath

With every normal breath we take, our lungs take in roughly 500 ml (18 oz.) of air. Added up over the course of a day, the average person breathes in enough air to fill a normal-sized swimming pool.

### No one really knows why we have fingerprints

Fingerprints may be helpful for catching criminals, but is that really what they were designed for? In truth, nobody really knows. Scientists

once believed it was to help us grip objects, but, in fact, fingerprints actually reduce friction and our ability to grasp smooth objects. Some now believe that our fingerprints "may help us to grasp rough or wet surfaces, protect our fingers from damage, and increase touch sensitivity.



### The sartorius is the longest muscle in your body

The sartorius muscle (whose name is derived from the Latin word for tailor, believed to reference the "cross-legged position in which tailors once



legged position in which tailors once sat”) is the longest muscle in the human body. This long, thin muscle runs down the length of the thigh, crossing two joints the hip and the knee and measures some 50 cm). The sartorius has multiple functions, including helping stabilize the pelvis.



### **Up to half your grip strength comes from your pinky**

Many of us raise our pinky finger while sipping tea, creating a bad habit of not engaging this small yet strong body part. Studies have shown that the lowly pinky accounts for up to half the strength in our hands. This may seem trivial, but as we age, grip strength becomes a biomarker of health, for everything from overall strength and upper limb function to quality of life.

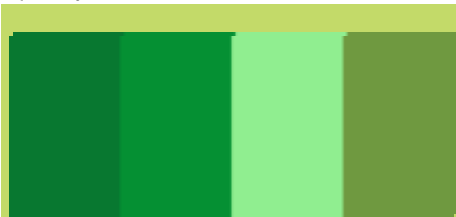


### **The gluteus maximus is the largest muscle in your body**

Yes, it's true your behind (also known as gluteus maximus) is the largest muscle in your body. Though many of us spend our days sitting on it, this big, strong muscle helps us maintain good posture, walk, run, and climb stairs and hills. So don't neglect your backside!

### **Your heart will beat over three billion times during your lifetime**

Your heart is the "hardest-working muscle" in your body. It beats roughly 100,000 times per day, which, depending on your lifespan, can add up to over three billion heartbeats.



### **You see the colour green better than any other shade**

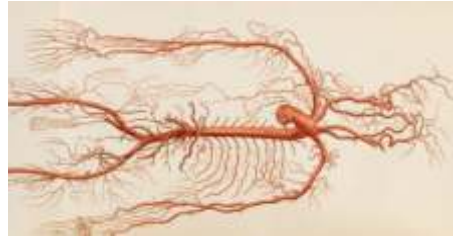
While the human eye can register approximately 100 different colour shades (and distinguish about a million), it sees green the best. Why? Because humans perceive the three primary colours, blue, green, and red

on a spectrum, and green lies in the middle, "where our perception is at its best.



**Your brain is more than half fat**

Fat is often demonised by the weight-loss industry, but it's actually essential to your health, especially your brain. The human brain is made of roughly 60% fat, making it the "fattiest organ" in the body. What's more, fatty acids are vital to brain function. So be sure to load up on plenty of healthy fats, such as oily fish, nuts, seeds, and avocados.



**Your blood "travels" the distance of the United States four times every day**

Your blood gets around! In a single day, your blood travels 19,000 km (12,000 miles), four times the distance from the east coast to the west coast of the United States.



**Your foot is the same length as the distance from your wrist to your elbow**

Indeed, the length from your elbow to your wrist is the same as the length of your foot. Measure it and see!



**80% of everything you learn comes through your eyes**

We rely on our eyes for more than just getting around. According to research, "80% of all learning during a child's first 12 years comes through the eyes." A good reason to get your children's eyes checked!

**You're born without kneecaps**

The patella (also known as kneecap) is a unique bone that serves to protect the knee joint and enables the tendon to extend the leg.

However, when you're born, your kneecap isn't bone at least not yet. It begins its life as cartilage, a soft tissue, which ossifies into a hard bone by the age of three.



### **You're born with almost 100 more bones than when you grow up**

When you're born, you have about 300 bones in your body. However, as you grow up, some of these bones fuse together, leaving you with just 206 by the time you're an adult.

### **Every day, you produce enough saliva to fill two cans of soda**

drooling may be gross (unless it's done by a baby!), but saliva is nothing to be afraid of. In fact, it's an "essential component of the digestive process," helping you swallow your

food and prepping it for your stomach.

Saliva is 98% water, but it also contains electrolytes, enzymes, antibacterial compounds, and good bacteria. So, don't be too grossed out to learn that you produce enough saliva to fill two cans of soda each and every day.

### **Your nose can detect a trillion different scents**

It was once believed that your nose could only detect some 10,000 different smells. However, scientists have since discovered that the human nose can, in fact, distinguish more than 1 trillion scents.



### **Some people have more taste buds than others**

How's your palate? Are you good at perceiving subtle flavours? Maybe you have more taste buds than others!

It turns out that the number of taste buds you have can vary widely. Some people have 10,000, while others may only have 2,000. As you age, this number decreases, reducing your ability to perceive taste.



### **You can only last 11 days without sleep**

Like food and water, sleep is essential to the human body. Go too long without it, and you might start to hallucinate. The world record for going without sleep is 264 hours (a little over 11 days). Scientists don't know quite how long we can survive without sleep, but you don't want to try to find out!

### **Your liver is the only organ that can fully regenerate itself**

Some creatures, like lizards, can regrow their limbs. Humans cannot. But we can regenerate our liver. While other organs, like the heart,

can only repair damaged tissue with scar tissue, the liver can "replace damaged tissue with new cells" and completely regenerate within a month, depending on the circumstances.

### **Earwax cleans your ears**

Some people go to great lengths to remove the wax from their ears in an effort to clean them. Big mistake! Earwax has a job to do and that's to clean your ears. It also provides lubrication and fights bacteria. Go, earwax!



### **Your tongue print is unique**

Like fingerprints, tongue prints are unique. No two are alike, making them a great contender for a "new biometric authentication tool." However, in the era of Covid-19, it might not be such a good idea to go around licking things!



## WHY IS BELLY BUTTON (NAVEL) A POTENTIAL HEALTH DETECTOR?

The belly button is an important part of the body which is ignored the most. A person's navel or umbilicus is also known as the belly button. In some people it is flat and in other people it is protruding.

It marks the spot where the umbilical cord of the child was attached to the mum's and was the passage of nutrition for the child. After the child is born, the umbilical cord is cut. Some even consider it a mystery of life. The belly button holds several health benefits and can alter the health of an individual if it is taken care of.

### **It can tell a lot about your health**

On the importance of belly button, the belly button is connected to

multiple veins in the body as well as to the round ligament of the liver. Unlike any common misconceptions about the non-clinical nature of the nabhi (the belly button), the belly button says quite a lot about the health condition of a person.

According to Ayurveda, the abdomen is the location of the "Agni", which controls digestion, urination, etc. The belly button is the centre of the anterior abdomen where several pathologies are manifested.



### **What should you know about the navel?**

A variety of useful microorganisms live within the navel. The abundance of these microorganisms is an indicator of the general health and immunity of the individual.

The accumulation of fat around the belly region is an indicator of obesity (sthaulya in Ayurveda).

The protrusion of Nabhi is considered an indication of ailments like Ascites (Accumulation of fat around the belly region).



## What can go wrong with the belly button?

Dirty belly buttons can lead to several infections. A smelly discharge is seen from bacterial accumulation. If not treated early, it can lead to pus discharge too. Sebaceous cysts can also form inside the navel. It can be painful, swollen and may contain pus. Umbilical hernia can occur when there is pressure on the abdomen.

### How to take care of the navel?

Emphasising on the importance of the umbilicus oiling the navel can help deliver several health benefits like glowing skin, relieving skin rashes, relieving stomach aches and improved digestion.

It is also important to keep the navel clean and dry. Use a mild soap while bathing and rinse the navel with warm water and dry it with a towel.

### Key points to note

Though belly buttons do not have any visible functions, they have immense biological significance. It is pertinent to keep the umbilicus clean and dry. Take care of it while washing and bathing, so that unclean belly buttons do not become a breeding ground for pathogens and painful infections. In case of any infection do not self treat yourself and take recommendations from your doctors.



## Surprising Things Your Sense of Smell Reveals About Your Health

Women generally have a better sense of smell than men. The disparity between the genders gets greater with age.

The reason is not well understood, but it appears to be a cradle-to-grave advantage. If you put breast pads from nursing mothers in a bassinet and observe the rooting or orienting behaviour of babies, the females will generally be more responsive. When researchers autopsied the brains of men and women over 55 with jobs that could optimise their sense of smell (restaurant kitchens,

example), they found the women had 43% more cells in their olfactory bulbs (is a mass of tissue that contains nerve cells that involve the sense of smell. There are two olfactory bulbs on the bottom side of the brain, one above each nasal cavity) on average than the men.

It's just one of many fascinating facts being uncovered about our sense of smell, or olfaction. Covid-19's adverse effect on olfaction brought it popular and scientific attention. We saw a push to develop a quick, simple, and affordable test for smell loss.



Covid-19 also produced a unique smell loss, with less than a third of those with the disease having any nasal blockage. We used to think congestion caused smell loss, but now we know that's not always the case. Scientists are re-examining how

viruses damage the olfactory system, both short-term and long-term.



Otolaryngologists, are those who study and treat disorders of the nose, ear and throat. It was not always so. Smell used in hunting, detecting danger, and other primal activities is now far less critical. Some adults effectively turned up their noses at smell, ranking it the least valued of our five senses.

But smell remains crucial to our well-being. We're learning more and more that our sense of smell is closely linked to our health and could one day be used for monitoring our health and predicting disease.

### **What Happens When You Smell Something**

Consider what happens when we detect an odour something we do thousands of times a day. For something to have a smell, it must give off molecules. We inhale these molecules into the tops of our noses, where 6 million to 10 million specialised receptor cells await. Some molecules contain multiple chemicals,

so they bind to families of receptors, creating a scent pattern.



Once this happens, the receptor cells message the olfactory bulb at the base of the brain, and the process of recognition and reaction begins. Sometimes, that happens right away (rotting flesh). Other times, it takes a bit longer. And sometimes, nothing registers at all. (When you have a cold, mucus prevents the molecules from fighting through.)



It has been estimated that there are 40 billion molecules that can have an odour. Some of these odours may smell the same or be undetectable by humans. It's impossible to know for sure how many we can detect, tens or even hundreds of thousands.

Our sense of taste operates in a similar fashion, which is why people often confuse the two senses. Sensory cells in taste buds that line the tongue, back of the mouth, and palate detect chemicals in food molecules and relay that information to the brain. As we chew and swallow, some of these molecules are forced up through the nasal cavity to our old friends, the olfactory receptors, who contribute to the process. It is recommended pinching your nose shut while chewing a piece of chocolate. Closing the passageway between the oral and nasal cavities prevents food molecules from getting through, and you from tasting anything. The same thing happens when you have a cold.



### **Your Sense of Smell**

Most things we think of as taste depend upon the smell system. That's why a significant number of people who consult practitioners complaining of being unable to taste anything actually have a smell problem.

The same receptors found in the nose have also turned up in the kidneys, heart, and lungs. Why that's so isn't clear. It is believed it's because these cells have multiple functions.

For example, some appear in the "carotid body," a small cluster of cells near the carotid artery in the neck and seem to be able to sense how much oxygen and carbon dioxide is present basically measuring and responding to lactate as if it were an odour.



Smells can also trigger memories, such as a sniff of a perfume that makes you think of the person who wore it, or the aroma of food cooking that reminds you of your grandmother.

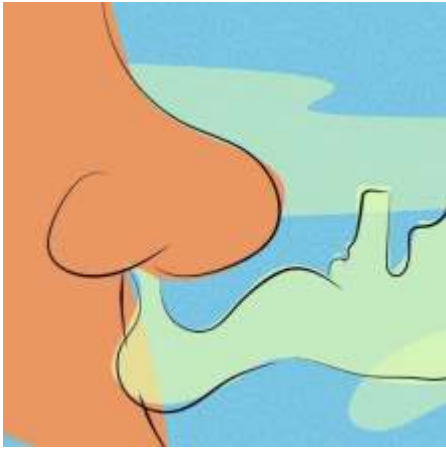
These "olfactory flashbacks" happen because the brain's smell-processing center links to its emotion and memory hub. A study found that the smell of cinnamon improved brain function and working memory, a finding that could help us treat dementia.



### **What Your Sense of Smell Can Tell You About Your Health**

In a study, 3,000 people ages 57 to 85 were given smell tests. Five years later, nearly 40% of those who did poorly on the original test had died, compared to 19% who scored moderately and 10% who tested well. The Study calculated that a significant loss of smell is a stronger predictor of 5-year mortality (the likelihood of dying in the next 5 years) than emphysema, cancer, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, or congestive heart failure.

This study has since been replicated, so the association isn't a one-time stroke of luck or twist of fate. Other research links olfactory dysfunction to many neurodegenerative diseases (Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, epilepsy) and autoimmune disorders (multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, myasthenia gravis).



Indeed, scientists are training dogs (and even ants) to sniff out diseases like cancer, and at least one woman has shown that she's able to detect Parkinson's by smell.

Whether "super-smellers", people with a hypersensitive sense of smell, exist, is controversial. The smeller spectrum varies widely. Just as with everything else, some people are better at it than others.

Smell dysfunction can be a very early indicator of these things, so if you notice anything amiss, it can't hurt to consult a doctor or arrange to be tested for olfactory problems. The results provide a baseline for your sense of smell and may also indicate disease. For example, "about 90% of people who develop Parkinson's had verifiable smell loss early on.



In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the smell of acetone nail polish remover in the breath was regarded as indicative of diabetes. There's also a metabolic disorder called maple syrup disease where the urine is sweet-smelling. There are many other examples in the medical literature where skin odour is related to certain diseases. There's no reason why changes in the body that occur with certain diseases, if they end up in our saliva or blood, couldn't be discerned by a dog or even a human.

### **You May Not Be Sick – Just Aging**

Like hearing and vision, our sense of smell gradually weakens over time. Research shows that 75% of people over 80 have "some apparent deficit." Between ages 65 and 80, this is true for half the population. Among those over 65, 5% to 15% have no sense of smell at all (a condition called anosmia).

This decline is believed to be caused, at least in part, by the colds we catch over the years. The olfactory endothelium, or membrane at the top of the nose,



accumulates little islands of damage called metaplasia every time we have a bad cold. So, by the time we're in our 60s and 70s, something that otherwise would be harmless, like the common cold, can take us over the waterfall.

A big area of research right now is whether age-related smell loss can be slowed or stopped, and if our sense of smell can be improved. Not really: Receptor cells can't be strengthened by working them out, so to speak. And once they're damaged by viruses, accident or aging, they can't be regenerated.

But you can learn to smell better. The trendy notion of "olfactory training" is a little misleading; it's the brain that can be trained. We can teach ourselves to recognise and identify new scents. Wine stewards essentially do the same thing, exposing themselves to many varieties of wine to learn their scent nuances.

### **The Future of Smell Research**

We no longer spend our days sniffing the ground and tracking prey. But the genes that governed these ancient behaviours are still with us. And not only can scientists detect the original or ancestral version of these genes (so-called non-functional or pseudo genes), but they can also identify variants or newer versions of them.

It was found that most often, the variants that predicted lower intensity (for smells) were the newer variants. In olfaction, our genes are mutating faster than in other families of genes.



If anything is happening, it will take centuries to unfold. And any ability to smell that we have lost may have been replaced or compensated for by our gaining new ones. (Like smelling a gas leak, something prehistoric man had no need to recognise or fear.) Like every other part of us, our sense of smell is always evolving. Even more intriguing discoveries lie ahead. The mapping from chemical structure to olfactory perception is unknown (unlike in vision, where wavelength translates into colour, and in hearing, where frequency predicts pitch).

Imagine that. If my wife is at work, I could text her a sample scent of the milk to see if it's safe to drink.



## THE REAL REASON YOU'RE NOT MOTIVATED TO EXERCISE

Could your gut health be behind your motivation or lack thereof to exercise? Researchers recently explored this topic when they wanted to find out why some laboratory mice seem to love their exercise wheel, while others mostly ignore it.

To start, the researchers used a machine-learning algorithm to look for biological traits that could explain the differences in activity levels among mice. And what they found surprised them: Genetics seemed to have little to do with it, but differences in gut bacteria appeared to matter more. A handful of studies backed that up: Thriving gut microbiomes have been

linked with optimal muscle function in mice.

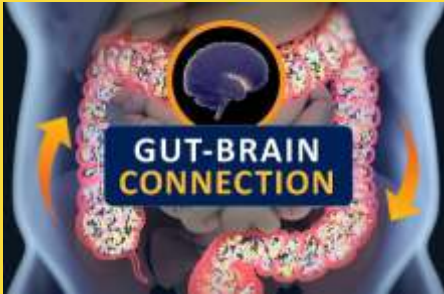
Sure enough, when the researchers dosed mice with broad-spectrum antibiotics, killing off their gut bacteria, the distance the rodents were able to run dropped by half. But off the antibiotics, the mice mostly regained their previous performance levels.

The Researchers suggested that the gut microbiome may help regulate the desire to exercise.

If confirmed in humans, this hypothesis could help explain why so many people fail to get the recommended amount of physical activity. Some may blame lack of time, energy, or interest. But perhaps the reason could come down to the trillions of microbes living in our gut.

This line of research could also lead to microbiome-based ways to get sedentary people off the couch or

optimise athletic performance. But how could your microbiome impact your motivation to move? To find the answer, the researchers zeroed in on the brain.



### The Gut-Brain Connection

After treating the mice with antibiotics, the researchers sequenced RNA in the rodents' striatum (the part of the brain responsible for motivation). They found reduced gene expression in the cells' dopamine receptors the things that release the neurochemical dopamine, making you feel like you've accomplished something good. In other words: Mice treated with antibiotics were getting less of a dopamine hit after their run. Only when we started focusing on the brain did we understand that the microbiome's effect on exercise capacity was mediated by the central and peripheral nervous systems. This realisation completely changed the trajectory of the project.

To find out how, exactly, bacteria in the colon were signaling the brain, the

researchers performed a series of experiments over several years. They identified two types of bacteria, *Eubacterium rectale* and *Coprococcus* *eutactus*. These strains produce compounds called fatty acid amides that interact with endocannabinoid receptors in the gut.



Those endocannabinoid receptors signal the brain to cut back its production of monoamine oxidase, the compound that breaks down dopamine. With less of this dopamine-clearing compound in the brain, more dopamine could build up after a long run, making the mice feel good and

eager to hit the exercise wheel again soon.



This gut-brain pathway may have evolved to couple the initiation of prolonged physical activity to the nutritional status of the gastrointestinal tract. Gut bacteria monitor what's in your colon and tell your brain whether you have enough food to fuel a workout.

Your colon, or gut, hosts trillions of microbes with potentially hundreds of different bacteria strains. These strains are determined by the food you eat and the environment you occupy.



The genetic impact on the microbiome is rather minor, but lifestyle factors strongly impact the composition of the gut microbiome.

Researchers hope to develop nutritional interventions to encourage the growth of the motivating types of bacteria, the kind that make you want to go for a 5-mile run.

### **What's Next?**

Moving forward, the researchers need to find out whether the gut affects motivation in humans, too. To do that, they're analysing the gut microbiomes of people with varying levels of exercise motivation.

With enough samples, we could potentially correlate species of microbiota that exist in exercise-motivated individuals.

Variations in the gut microbiome could help explain the "runner's high" that some people have in a long-distance race. The research could also help promote weight training or sports participation. Imagine if a sports team could optimally motivate the athletes on the team to exercise. The laboratory is investigating the microbiome's impact on high-intensity interval training.

Signals from the gut to the brain could be affecting body processes in other ways too, the researchers speculate.

There are so many possibilities for how these signals may change physiology and impact health. A new set of studies may well establish a whole new branch of exercise physiology.

# How to Get Rid of Hiccups



Hiccups are normal; they happen to almost everyone. Yet they're highly annoying every single time you come down with them. And if hiccups don't go away fast, they can become uncomfortable, even embarrassing. Sometimes the more determined you are to get rid of them, the longer they stick around.

## **What are hiccups, exactly?**

Even though we've all experienced them many times, what are hiccups, anyway? A hiccup occurs when there is a spasm or contraction of the muscles in between the ribs and the diaphragm, which is the largest muscle responsible for breathing.

During one of these spasms, you suck in air. That air passes through the vocal cords, resulting in the telltale hiccup sound.

Hiccups are involuntary and something you can't readily control. It's thought that a hiccup is a 'reflex' that occurs in the body.

## **What causes hiccups**

Experts aren't totally sure they know all the reasons why hiccups happen. In general, things that irritate the diaphragm or the nerves that connect to the diaphragm (called the phrenic and vagus nerves), can lead to hiccups. Those include eating or drinking too fast, sipping carbonated beverages or alcohol, and being stressed out or really excited.

Certain medical conditions, such as acid reflux, can be a trigger, and hiccups could be a side effect of certain medications. One of the most well-known hiccup-causing medications are benzodiazepines, which are used to treat anxiety.





### How to get rid of hiccups

Most of the time, hiccups will go away within several minutes. So typically, you don't have to do anything to make them disappear except wait. Sometimes, ignoring hiccups is the best thing you can do. They usually don't last very long and typically go away on their own.

However, let's say you have a Zoom presentation to give in five minutes, and you'd rather not hiccup between every sentence in front of your colleagues. What can you do to nip them in the bud? Home remedies include:

- Taking deep, slow breaths
- Drinking water or ice water
- Gargling
- Letting someone or something scare you
- Biting into a lemon
- Holding your breath for 5-10 seconds
- Pulling on your tongue
- Blowing up a balloon
- Breathing into a paper bag
- Sitting down and pulling your knees to your chest for one minute

- Putting a cold compress on your face

You might also try the valsava maneuver. To do it, pinch your nose and hold your breath, then force yourself to exhale and bear down as if you're going to poop. Hold for about 10 seconds. This might be one you want to attempt if you're at home by yourself versus in public, though.



Unfortunately, experts say that none of these "cures" emerge as the winning remedy. But the good news is, they might get rid of your hiccups, and most are safe to try. While these remedies sound rather random, they all tap into a couple of mechanisms. They either disrupt the pattern of diaphragm spasms (such as holding your breath) or irritate the phrenic or vagus nerves to disrupt the nerve

impulse (such as putting a cold compress on your face or gargling).

In the case of pulling your knees up to your chest, this might work by putting pressure on the diaphragm. The study said that exhaling and then holding your breath was their preferred cure.

Speaking of attempting these remedies, not everyone should try them. It is noted that if you have cardiac or respiratory disease, where shortness of breath is common, then it might not be a good idea to attempt holding your breath for a long period of time. If you're not sure if a remedy is safe for you, consult your doctor first.



### **How to prevent hiccups**

If you get hiccups a lot, pay attention to when you're getting them in the first place. If you notice that you tend to have hiccups in similar situations overeating, consuming spicy foods, exposure to irritants then you may have to avoid those situations going forward if the hiccups are truly a nuisance to you. Should you notice

that stress sets off your hiccups, consider slowing down and building more opportunities for self-care.

### **When to see a doctor for hiccups**

It's rare, but sometimes serious medical conditions can cause hiccups. Those can be problems with the central nervous system or even a tumour.

If your hiccups don't go away within two days (and yes, that's a long time to be saddled with the hiccups), check in with your doctor; medication might be able to stop them. For frequent cases of hiccups, your physician might want you to undergo testing. If an underlying cause for your hiccups is found (like you have acid reflux), then your doctor will work with you on treating the condition.

Indeed, hiccups aren't just a small problem they can take a real toll on your quality of life when you have them: Long-term, hiccups can cause disruption through trouble eating and sleeping. We want to make sure that nothing more serious is going on. It's important to get medical attention because in rare cases, they do last a long time.

And who knows? Maybe your hiccups went away during the time it took you to read this.

## Understanding the Side Effects of Sleeping Pills

Between a third and half of people have insomnia and complain of poor sleep. Perhaps you're one of them. If so, you may be considering taking a sleeping pill.

A sleeping pill can help your sleep problems in the short term. But it's important to understand everything you need to know about sleeping pills. That includes knowing about sleeping pill side effects. When you do, you can avoid misusing these sedatives.



### What Are Sleeping Pills?

Most sleeping pills are classified as "sedative hypnotics." That's a specific class of drugs used to go to sleep or stay asleep. Sedative hypnotics

include benzodiazepines, barbiturates, and various hypnotics.

Benzodiazepines such as Ativan, Librium, Valium, and Xanax are anti-anxiety medications. They also increase drowsiness and help people sleep. Halcion is an older benzodiazepine sedative-hypnotic medicine that has largely been replaced by newer medicines. While these drugs may be useful for the short term, all benzodiazepines are potentially addictive and can cause problems with memory and attention. They are usually not recommended for long-term treatment of sleeping problems.

Barbiturates, another group of drugs in this sedative-hypnotic class, depress the central nervous system and can cause sedation. Short-term or long-acting barbiturates are prescribed as sedatives or sleeping pills. But more commonly, these hypnotic drugs are limited to use as

anesthesia. They can be fatal in overdose.



Newer medications help you fall asleep faster. Some of these sleep-inducing drugs, which bind to the same receptors in the brain as do benzodiazepines, include Ambien, Lunesta, and Sonata.

They are somewhat less likely than benzodiazepines to be habit-forming, but over time can still sometimes cause physical dependence. They can work quickly to increase drowsiness and sleep. Another sleep aid, called Rozerem, acts differently from other sleep medicines. It affects a brain hormone called melatonin, and it's not addictive. Belsomra is another unique sleep aid that affects a brain chemical called orexin and is not addictive. Another sleep medicine that is not addictive, Doxepin, is a

low-dose form of the tricyclic antidepressant doxepin.

### **What Are the Side Effects of Sleeping Pills?**

Like most medications, sleeping pills have side effects. You won't know, though, whether you will have side effects with a particular sleeping pill until you try it.

Your doctor may be able to tell you about some side effects if you have asthma or other health conditions. Sleeping pills can interfere with normal breathing and can be dangerous in people who have certain chronic lung problems such as asthma, emphysema, or forms of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).



Common side effects of prescription sleeping pills such as Zolpidem, Triazdam, Eszopiclone, Ramepteon, and Zaleplon include:

- Burning or tingling in the hands, arms, feet, or legs
- Changes in appetite
- Constipation
- Diarrhea

- Balance problems
- Dizziness
- Daytime drowsiness
- Dry mouth or throat
- Gas or Flatulence
- Headache
- Heartburn
- Impairment the next day
- Mental slowing or problems with attention or memory
- Stomach pain or tenderness
- Uncontrollable shaking of a part of the body
- Unusual dreams
- Weakness

It's important to be aware of possible sleeping pill side effects so you can stop the drug and call your doctor immediately to avoid a more serious health problem.



### **Sleeping Pills and Older Adults**

If you're 65 or older, experts suggest that you avoid all sleep aids. This includes over-the-counter drugs and the newer "Z" drugs like eszopiclone (Lunesta), zaleplon (Sonata), and zolpidem (Ambien).

Compared to younger people, older adults have a greater chance of health problems on sleep medication. When you are older, sleeping pills tend to stay in your system longer. Drowsiness can last into the day after you've taken them. Confusion and memory problems are also a known side effect. For older adults, this could result in falls, broken hips and car accidents.

Other symptoms of some over-the-counter sleep medications can be especially hard for older adults to handle. Your mouth may be dry. You may also be constipated and find it hard to urinate.

Before you decide to take sleeping pills, talk to your doctor. They may recommend a medical exam to help you figure out the cause of your sleep problems, like depression, anxiety, or a sleep disorder. Your doctor will also suggest ways to treat sleeplessness without drugs.

### **Are There More Complex Sleeping Pill Side Effects?**

Some sleeping pills have potentially harmful side effects, including parasomnias. Parasomnias are movements, behaviours, and actions over which you have no control, like sleepwalking. During a parasomnia, you are asleep and unaware of what is happening. Parasomnias with sleeping pills are complex sleep behaviours and may include sleep eating, making phone



calls, or having sex while in a sleep state. Sleep driving, which is driving while not fully awake, is another serious sleeping pill side effect. Though rare, parasomnias are difficult to detect once the medication takes effect.

Product labels for sedative-hypnotic medicines include language about the potential risks of taking a sleeping pill. Because complex sleep behaviours are more likely to occur if you increase the dosage of a sleeping pill, take only what your doctor prescribes, no more.



- Blurred vision or any other problems with your sight
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing
- Feeling that the throat is closing
- Hives
- Hoarseness
- Itching
- Nausea
- Pounding heartbeat
- Rash
- Shortness of breath
- Swelling of the eyes, face, lips, tongue, or throat
- Vomiting



### **Can I Be Allergic to Sleeping Pills?**

People can have an allergic reaction to any medicine, which could be related to either the active ingredient of the medicine itself or to any of its inactive ingredients (such as dyes, binders or coatings). People who have an allergic reaction to a specific sleeping pill should avoid it. It's important to talk to your doctor at the first sign of these serious side effects, including:

In addition, a serious even deadly side effect of any medicine someone is allergic to is anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis is an acute allergic reaction. Another possible effect is angioedema, which is severe facial swelling. Again, discuss these possibilities with your doctor if you are at risk of allergic reactions.

### **When Do I Take a Sleeping Pill?**

It's usually recommended that you take the sleeping pill right before your

desired bedtime. Read your doctor's instructions on the sleeping pill prescription label. The instructions have specific information regarding your medication. In addition, always allow ample time to sleep before you take a sleeping pill.



### **Is It Dangerous to Combine Sleeping Pills and Alcohol?**

Yes. Mixing alcohol and sleeping pills can have additive sedating effects from both drugs, and the combination can cause someone to stop breathing, which could cause death. Sleeping pill labels warn against using alcohol while taking the drug.

Also, you should not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice while taking some sleeping pills. Grapefruit increases the amount of the drug absorbed into your bloodstream and how long it stays in the body. That can cause over-sedation.



### **Can I Become Dependent on Sleeping Pills?**

For short-term insomnia, your doctor may prescribe sleeping pills for several days. Yet after regular use for a longer period, some sleeping pills such as benzodiazepines or benzodiazepine agonists such as zolpidem or eszopiclone may stop working as you build a tolerance to the medication. (However, tolerance has not been shown with non-habit-forming sleeping pills like Belsomra, Rozerem, or Silenor).



You may also become psychologically dependent on the medicine. Then the idea of going to sleep without it will make you anxious.

Without the sleeping pill, you might find it difficult to sleep. If that happens, it could be a sign of a physical or emotional dependence or both. Some studies show that long-term use of sleeping pills actually interferes with sleep. The best way to avoid developing a physical or emotional dependence on sleeping pills is to follow your doctor's instructions and stop taking the drug when recommended.

# BODY LANGUAGE



## **Myth: Small Bladder, Big Problems**

Some people blame a small bladder for frequent leaks, but your body's normal "capacity" is rarely the true cause of such a problem. In healthy people, that capacity ranges from 1 to 2 cups. The real culprit is more likely to be weak muscles, medication side effects, infection, or nerve damage. Treatments are available.



## **Fact: Twice a Night Isn't Right**

One bathroom trip during the night may be acceptable, but excessive urination is called nocturia and it's time for a checkup.

To determine if it's caused by a treatable condition, your doctor will want more information: a bathroom diary, a record of fluids you drank, and a list of medications and known illnesses. Some possible causes include drinking a lot just before bed,

an enlarged prostate, underlying medical conditions (such as hypertension, arthritis, depression/anxiety, diabetes mellitus), certain medications, and overactive bladder.



## **Myth: You Need 8 Glasses a Day**

Fluid needs differ, depending on your size and activity. You may not need eight glasses of water a day. The best advice for healthy people is to drink when you're thirsty and stay hydrated. This keeps urine from becoming too concentrated and lowers the risk of getting kidney stones.

## **Fact: Anyone Can Have Bladder Trouble**

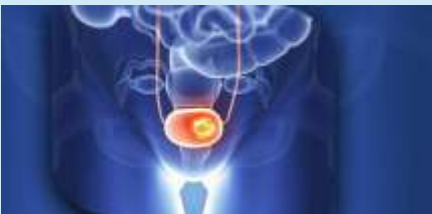
Bladder problems can affect both men and women at different stages of life. They're more common in certain groups including women who are sexually active, have had children,

or are menopausal; older adults; men with a history of prostate trouble; and people with spinal cord injuries. If you're having problems, you should seek advice from a doctor.



**Myth: Drinking Less Is Best**

Waving off the waiter when they try to refill your glass may help a little. But doctors say a healthy bladder should be able to handle a normal amount of fluid. You might want to think more about *what* you drink. Caffeine is a bladder stimulant. Consider downsizing that morning cup of coffee or skipping the cola.



**Fact: It's Not Always a Prostate Problem**

A frequent need to go *can* be caused by an enlarged prostate, but it can also be caused by an overactive

bladder (OAB). The conditions have similar symptoms, but the causes and treatments are different. An enlarged prostate puts pressure on your urethra, OAB is a muscle control problem. Talk to your doctor about your symptoms and find out testing you may need.



**Fact: Kegels Are for Men, Too**

You may have heard of women doing these bladder-control moves, but doctors recommend them for men, too. The muscles of the pelvic floor control how you stop and start your urine stream. On an empty bladder, try contracting these muscles for 3-5 seconds and then release. Keep the stomach, buttocks, and legs relaxed. Work up to three sets of 10 repetitions each day. You can do Kegels anywhere, anytime, without anyone noticing. Practice when lying down, standing and sitting.

### **Fact: A System and Schedule May Help**

Bladder training is a first step that helps some people with overactive bladders. You set a schedule for bathroom breaks and try to resist the first urge to go in between. Gradually, you can try holding it longer.

Together with Kegels, these two methods can cut overactive bladder episodes in half.

### **Fact: Shaping Up for Bladder Control**

A healthy lifestyle may help prevent and lessen some bladder problems. Doctors say getting regular exercise and doing Kegels can curb stress incontinence, the leakage caused by coughing, laughing, or sneezing. And because carrying a lot of extra weight causes bladder troubles, slimming down may help, too.

### **Myth: Bladder Problems Are a Fact of Life**

If bladder problems are bothering you, talk with your doctor. Incontinence is a medical problem not an inevitable part of aging. Treatment can help with symptoms and your day-to-day life. Your treatment plan will depend on your specific problem and your overall health.



## KNOW WHICH SUPPLEMENTS SHOULD NOT BE MIXED TOGETHER AND WHY?

There are certain supplements which should not be taken together.

Supplements are considered to be healthy and people believe that these have no side effects which is why supplements are mostly taken without medical prescriptions.

However, one should know that there are supplements which react with each other and when these supplements are taken together it harms the body.

Not just this, supplements are also harmful if you are taking certain medications.

Here are certain supplement combinations one should avoid consuming together:



### **GREEN TEA AND IRON**

Did you know that green tea reduces the body's ability to absorb iron? While we all know that vitamin C boosts the iron absorption in the body, green tea which is considered to be one of the healthiest drinks actually interferes with the absorption of iron. Iron is an essential element of the body and plays a central role in immunity. Hence, if you are taking green tea make sure you are not overdoing it.



### **MAGNESIUM AND CALCIUM**

This is another dangerous duo which should not be taken together. Magnesium aids in calcium

absorption and hence prevents issues in the bones like osteoporosis.

However, taking both the supplements together reduces the absorption of magnesium. This leads to deficiency of magnesium, an essential element required for nerve and muscle function, blood sugar and blood pressure control. Low levels of magnesium are found in people who are older, have type 2 diabetes or have gastrointestinal disease. Take tablets individually 2 hours apart.



### **VITAMIN C AND COPPER**

Vitamin C needs no introduction. It is used for several reasons; the prominent ones are immunity boosting and lowering blood pressure. Likewise, copper is an essential element too. It creates the connective tissue and also contributes to lowering the risk associated with heart issues.

However, despite being so important supplements of these two elements should not be taken together



because vitamin C interferes with the body's ability to absorb copper.



### **VITAMIN D, E AND K**

When discussed separately we know each of these vitamins are extremely essential to the human body. But doctors advise against taking supplements of these vitamins at a time, it is because when consumed together the absorption of vitamins K is disturbed by vitamin D and E. Hence one should take these vitamins 2 hours apart.



### **COPPER AND ZINC**

Another dangerous duo is copper and zinc. Zinc reduces the chances of copper getting absorbed in the body. Due to this the patient is likely to suffer from fatigue, cold, sensitivity and brittle bones. If needed, copper and zinc supplements should be taken two hours apart in order to maximise their absorption chances.

## **CHUCKLES**



### **CHINESE TAKEAWAYS**

I ordered a Chinese takeaway from a local place, just been to pick it up and as I was driving home, I heard the bags rustling and moving!

I thought what on Earth is that. Has something got in the bag? I thought I could see a little pair of eyes peering out at me.

I was driving so I leaned forward, picked up the bag, put it on the passenger seat and there it was again, more rustling and little eyes looking out from behind the prawn crackers.

I thought it's got to be a rat or a mouse or something, so I carefully pulled the bag down ...

And there it was ...

A Peking Duck!



## ONE OF LIFE'S LESSONS

While preaching about forgiving one's enemies, the preacher asked for a show of hands of those who were willing to forgive their enemies. About half of the congregation raised their hands. The Minister continued his Sermon and again asked for a show of hands. This time, 80% of his congregation raised their hands. Not giving up, the Minister continued for 15 more minutes. When he again asked for a show of hands, all members except one raised their hands. "Mr Jones," asked the Minister, "are you not willing to forgive your enemies?" I don't have any, Mr Jones said.

"That is very unusual. I know you are 86 years old. Would you please come down to the front and explain

to all of us how you have lived so long without making a single enemy in the World?"

Mr Jones walked unsteadily to the front and briefly explained, "It's easy, I've outlived every one of them."



**I've entered a competition to write a song for Abba. There's no second prize, the winner takes it all.**

**Writing a song for Bon Jovi at the moment. I'm half way there.**

**Heard about a zombie who writes songs. He's a decomposer.**

**Delighted that my local songwriters' group have commissioned me to write a new song for Tom Jones. I asked if it was normal for a new member. They said "It's Not Unusual"...**

**I was hired as a songwriter by Spandau Ballet. I've started, but I find it hard to write the next line. Was going to write a song for Bonnie Tyler but ended up watching a cardiology video. It's totally clips of the heart.**



**Medical Aid Society**  
Reliable. Efficient. Dependable



<https://www.facebook.com/masca.co.zw>

**PEOPLE TO CONTACT WHEN IN NEED**

<b>Mr D. Bramsen</b>	<b><a href="mailto:dbramsen@masca.co.zw">dbramsen@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>CEO, Management Queries</b>
<b>Ms T. Chimuti</b>	<b><a href="mailto:tchimuti@masca.co.zw">tchimuti@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Chief Financial Officer</b>
<b>Mr M. Gumbo</b>	<b><a href="mailto:mgumbo@masca.co.zw">mgumbo@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>IT Support Analyst</b>
<b>Mr D. Riley</b>	<b><a href="mailto:driley@masca.co.zw">driley@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Corporate Manager</b>
<b>Miss T. Noble</b>	<b><a href="mailto:tnoble@masca.co.zw">tnoble@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Medical Services Queries</b>
<b>Mrs E. Mukandiwa</b>	<b><a href="mailto:membership@masca.co.zw">membership@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Harare Branch Manager</b>
<b>Mr M. Ngwenya</b>	<b><a href="mailto:accounts@masca.co.zw">accounts@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Accounts Supervisor</b>
<b>Mrs B. Mahlangu</b>	<b><a href="mailto:marketing@masca.co.zw">marketing@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Marketing Assistant</b>
<b>Ms M. Jamieson</b>	<b><a href="mailto:secretary@masca.co.zw">secretary@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Private Secretary/Editor</b>
<b>Mrs S. Moyo</b>	<b><a href="mailto:investigation@masca.co.zw">investigation@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Claims Investigation</b>
<b>Mr M. Ndlovu</b>	<b><a href="mailto:medical@masca.co.zw">medical@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Medical Claims</b>
<b>Mr M. Ndlovu</b>	<b><a href="mailto:claims@masca.co.zw">claims@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Claims, Payments &amp; Refunds</b>
<b>Mrs H. Malila</b>	<b><a href="mailto:contributions@masca.co.zw">contributions@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Membership/Contributions</b>
<b>Miss N. Maseko</b>	<b><a href="mailto:creditors@masca.co.zw">creditors@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Admin and Creditors Assistant</b>
<b>Mr E. Tshuma</b>	<b><a href="mailto:queries@masca.co.zw">queries@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Human Resources &amp; Queries</b>
<b>Mrs N. Bere</b>	<b><a href="mailto:nbere@masca.co.zw">nbere@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Drug Supervisor</b>
<b>Mrs K. Banda</b>	<b><a href="mailto:optical@masca.co.zw">optical@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Optical Queries</b>
<b>Mrs N.B. Khumalo</b>	<b><a href="mailto:foreign@masca.co.zw">foreign@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Foreign Claims</b>
<b>Mr C. Sibanda</b>	<b><a href="mailto:managedcare@masca.co.zw">managedcare@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Managed Care Officer</b>
<b>Mrs L. Chitofu</b>	<b><a href="mailto:comms@masca.co.zw">comms@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Communications &amp; Wellness</b>
<b>Mrs J. Ndlovu</b>	<b><a href="mailto:secretaryhre@masca.co.zw">secretaryhre@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Secretary</b>
<b>Mrs I. Chiwaro</b>	<b><a href="mailto:reception@masca.co.zw">reception@masca.co.zw</a></b>	<b>Receptionist</b>

**MASCA Head Office (Bulawayo)**  
No. 2, 11th Ave, S.Parirenyatwa  
P O Box 1776, Bulawayo  
Tel: +263 292 263274/6  
Tel: +263 292 880829-33  
+263 292 2264711/71579/74880  
[marketing@masca.co.zw](mailto:marketing@masca.co.zw)

**MASCA GWERU AGENCY**  
No. 23 Lincoln Road  
Light Industrial Park, Gweru  
Tel: +263-254-222530-9  
[octancetax@gmail.com](mailto:octancetax@gmail.com)

**MASCA (HARARE)**  
37 College Rd, Alexandra Park  
P O Box A842 Avondale, Harare  
Tel: +263 242 744291/307/323/325  
[marketinghre@masca.co.zw](mailto:marketinghre@masca.co.zw)

 **08677004216**

[www.masca.healthcare](http://www.masca.healthcare)