



**Tell Me Why**

# WHY?

**I Get the Hiccups**



**Nancy Robinson Masters**



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# Hic! Hic!

Caleb hurried to the principal's office. It was his turn to read the announcements to the entire school.

Suddenly, funny sounds came out of his mouth.

*Hic! Hic!* He had hiccups!



*Hiccups can happen when you are nervous or excited.*

# What Is a Hiccup?

A hiccup is a sudden **spasm** of the **diaphragm** muscle. The diaphragm muscle is a large, thin sheet of stretchy tissue. It separates your lungs and heart from your stomach.

A diaphragm muscle spasm causes the **vocal cords** in your throat to slam shut. This makes the “hic” sound that comes out of your mouth. It takes less than a second for this to happen.



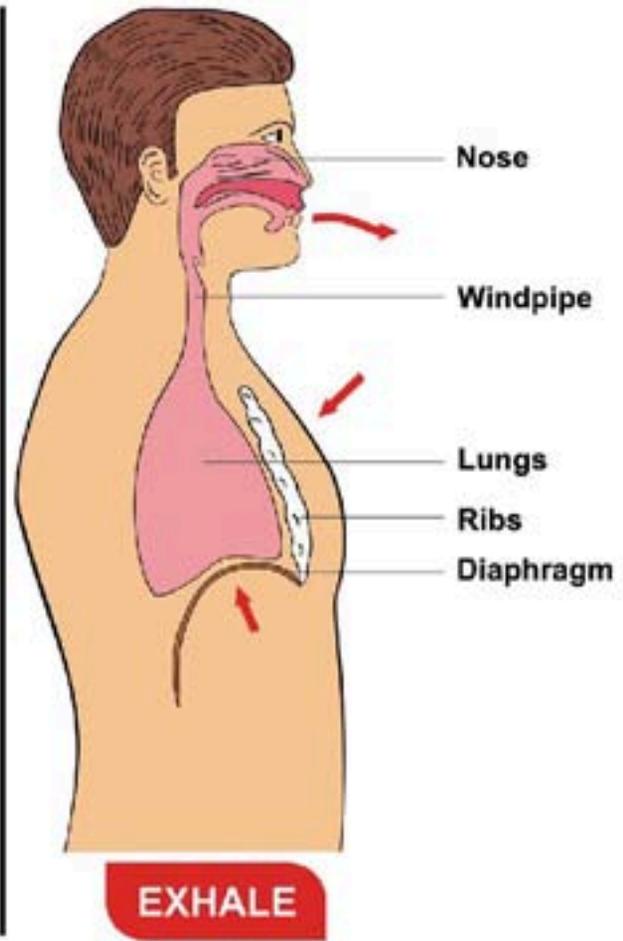
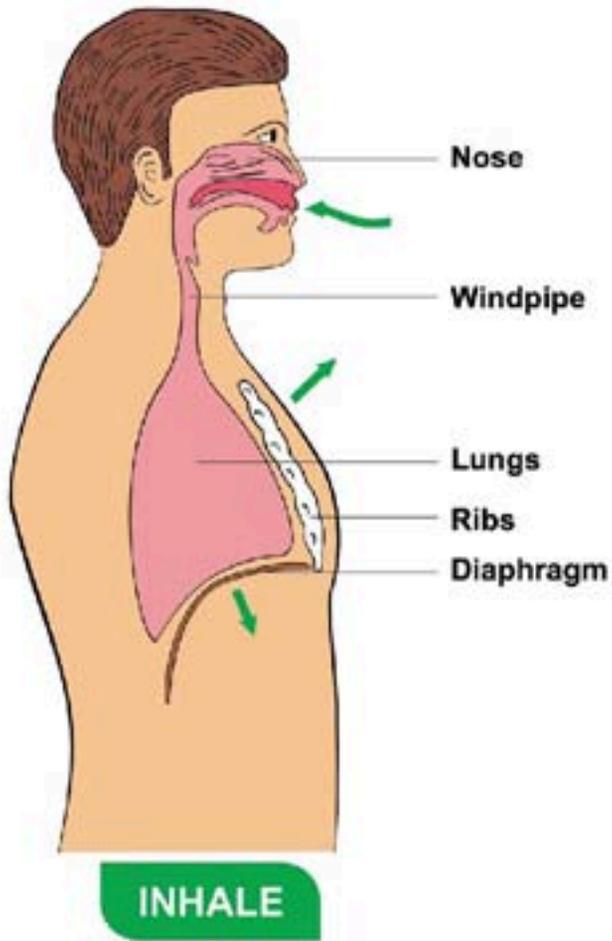
**LOOK!**

**Look at this drawing of the inside of your body. Where is the diaphragm muscle?**



*The diaphragm separates your heart and lungs from your stomach.*

The diaphragm also moves during normal breathing, but more steadily. When you inhale, or breathe in, it moves downward. This gives your lungs room to expand. When you exhale, or breathe out, it moves upward again as the air leaves your lungs.



*Your diaphragm moves each time you breathe in or out.*

# What Causes Hiccups?

The diaphragm muscle is part of your **respiratory system**. The respiratory system is made up of **organs** you use to breathe. The **phrenic nerve** controls the diaphragm muscle. This nerve goes from your brain to your stomach. It is like a long electrical cord. It signals the diaphragm to help move air into and out of your lungs.



## ASK QUESTIONS!

**Visit the school nurse. Ask him or her to help you find information on how to avoid hiccups.**



*Covering your mouth when you hiccup is the polite thing to do.*

**Irritants** can cause the phrenic nerve to send faulty signals to the diaphragm. These faulty signals result in spasms. The most common irritant is eating too much. Eating too fast is another. Swallowing air is a major irritant! Even feeling excited or scared can cause the diaphragm to spasm. When this happens, you may hiccup once or several times in a row.

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