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Infant hiccups while feeding

Being a mom Raising a baby Health & safety Baby hiccups are rarely a reason to worry, as they're completely normal for babies during the first year. Many infants get hiccups even while they are in the uterus! Recurrent hiccups in your baby shouldn't cause any problems for them. Let's learn more about newborn hiccups, how to prevent them, and when to call a doctor. Baby hiccups occur due to the contraction of the baby's diaphragm, along with the prompt closing of the vocal cords. During this process, the air leaves the vocal cords forcefully and creates the sound of hiccups. The exact cause of this isn't known, but baby hiccups are often linked to eating, drinking, and strong emotions including stress or excitement. Unlike adults, however, hiccups in babies usually don't affect them. Many babies are able to sleep uninterrupted during a hiccuping bout, and hiccups don't interfere with the breathing of the baby. Baby hiccups after eatingYour baby may develop hiccups after eating or drinking, especially if they swallow air during the feed (either breastfeeding or formula feeding). Hiccups in newborns may also occur if they overfeed or eat too quickly. All these factors may cause the stomach of the baby to expand, which pushes against the diaphragm and triggers a spasm, leading to baby hiccups. If your newborn has hiccups frequently and they cause distress, it may be due to gastroesophageal reflux (GER). In this condition, the esophageal sphincter isn't developed properly and partially-digested food mixed with stomach acid may regurgitate through the esophagus (food pipe). As the stomach content passes through the baby's diaphragm, it can trigger spasms and hiccups. What to do when a newborn has hiccups Hiccups in a newborn usually don't cause any harm. Unlike for adults, hiccups are less uncomfortable for babies and tend not to provoke any distress. So, what can you do for baby hiccups? Many times, baby hiccups get better by themselves. If the hiccups aren't disturbing your child, simply leave them to get better on their own. When the hiccups in your baby aren't due to feeding, you can give him or her a pacifier to suck, which helps relax the diaphragm and stop the hiccups. To get rid of baby hiccups, try burping in between feeding and offering the baby gripe water. You may also rub their back or rock back and forth to stop baby hiccups, as this helps the baby to calm down and relax, stopping the spasm of the diaphragm and, of course, the hiccups. Be sure not to hit or slap the back roughly or apply excessive force. How to stop baby hiccups after feeding To stop baby hiccups after feeding, you can try the following: Take a break from feeding and burp your child. This helps remove the excess gas in their stomach that may be irritating the diaphragm and causing hiccups. It also puts the baby in an upright position, which can be beneficial. According to the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics, you should burp your infant (if they're bottle-fed) after every two to three ounces. You should burp your breastfed baby in between switching breasts. If your baby hiccups a lot during feeding (both breastfeeding and formula feeding), you may slow the feeding so that your baby can take their time and feel relaxed. You may give your baby some gripe water to relieve the hiccups. Gripe water is a blend of water and herbs that is traditionally used to relieve colic and stomach discomfort. The herbs may include fennel, chamomile, cinnamon, and ginger. Though no scientific proof exists to support the idea that gripe water helps relieve baby hiccups, it carries low risk and many parents say it helps. Before introducing a new product to your baby, discuss it with your doctor. Some herbs may cause an allergy in infants. While there are some ways to help prevent the onset of baby hiccups, it's difficult to avoid them completely since the cause isn't always known. Try the following ways to prevent hiccups in babies: Ensure your infant is calm and relaxed during feedings. Don't wait until they become upset and start crying due to hunger before offering a feeding. Try to feed your infant in an upright position. After every feed, hold your infant upright for about 25 to 30 minutes. Give your baby smaller feeds at short intervals of time. If you feed your child by bottle, try to reduce the amount of air they swallow. Tilt the bottle until the milk fills the nipple completely before giving it to the baby. Make sure the hole in the bottle's nipple is not too big or too small for your baby. When you tip the bottle, a few drops of milk or formula should come out. While breastfeeding, ensure your baby's mouth is latched properly over your whole nipple. Avoid doing high-energy activity with your baby after feeding, including boisterous playing or bouncing up and down. Hiccups in newborns are usually considered normal until the child reaches the age of one year. However, if your baby hiccups a lot and seems agitated or upset while hiccuping, you should consult a pediatrician as this may indicate other medical conditions. GER may result in frequent and uncomfortable baby hiccups. Apart from hiccups, the following symptoms indicate that GER may be an issue: Crying more than usual, especially when you feed the baby Problems gaining weight Arching the spine (back) excessively, especially after or during feedings Spitting up more than usualIf you suspect that your baby may be suffering from GER, talk to a doctor, as they can easily treat this condition. You should also talk to a pediatrician if the hiccups are disturbing the sleep of your baby, or if hiccups continue occurring even after your child turns one year old. Hiccups in babies are a normal occurrence until about the age of one year. Hiccups usually don't affect babies and they may even sleep through a hiccuping bout. Baby hiccups occur when the diaphragm contracts and the vocal cords promptly close. In a newborn, they may occur after feeding, particularly if the baby swallowed air while feeding, overfed, or fed too quickly. To stop baby hiccups, try burping the baby regularly during feeding, offer a pacifier, or give the baby some gripe water. If your baby hiccups a lot and looks agitated or upset while hiccuping, consult a doctor. This may indicate a medical condition such as GER, which is easily treatable. Kate Shkodzik, MD — Obstetrician/Gynecologist, Medical Advisor at Flo Home / Baby / Baby Feeding July 10, 2020 by Emmy Samtani Baby hiccups start before your baby is born. Do you remember those cute little movements inside your tummy when you were pregnant? Whilst you may get concerned that something is wrong when your baby first gets the hiccups and you may even have tried to get rid of them, try not to worry... Infant hiccups are completely fine and there is absolutely no need to make an effort to stop them! Hiccups after feeding (especially breastfeeding), is one of the most common times for babies and newborns to experience hiccups and is something that can generally be relieved if you gently burp your baby. As startling as your baby's hiccups may feel at first, they aren't causing them any harm and are perfectly normal. If your baby's hiccups are in relation to how you feed your baby, here are a few tips and tricks. Things to look out for when feeding Whilst it's typical that they might have some hiccups after a feed, this could be in relation to how your baby gets their milk. For example, when you feed your baby the hiccups will typically go away after a few minutes or slow pauses – so give it some time. If you are breastfeeding, try slowing down feedings, and stop when they reduce their sucking. If they are making too many slurping noises then it's probably because your baby is ingesting a lot – and all at once! If they are swallowing too much air during feedings, check your baby's bottle to ensure that it isn't causing too much trapped gas. You could also check their teat, as if it is broken or too fast a flow, this may be causing the milk to flow quite quickly. It's important to note that they don't always start from a feeding, so you can let them pass and look at other possible causes. If your baby becomes extremely uncomfortable and is in obvious pain or consistently hiccups and vomits after feeding, it's always best to consult your medical professional. This could be a sign of something underlying or requiring more investigation, such as acid reflux. How can I best support my baby? It's absolutely fine to pick up your baby when she cries after eating. In fact, it is suggested that you burp your baby after every feed in order to eliminate any tiny gas bubbles that can build up. Place your baby in an upright position for a few minutes and gently rub in circular movements on their back. This should help to release any trapped gas after eating! It's also important to do this mid-feed i.e before you continue with feeding again on the second breast or before finishing off the bottle. Your baby will generally let you know that he's had enough at each feeding with a quiet alert. I.e they may stop sucking and let go of the breast – or even fall asleep! Once you are satisfied that your little one has been well fed, try to hold them close to your shoulder for some time after feeding, keeping the hiccupping to a minimum. Some parents worry about disturbing their little one's sleep if they have fallen asleep on the breast but it is important that you do so. As long as you are using 'baby friendly' techniques i.e soft and gentle movements, then your little one should still remain asleep and can easily be transferred. A dummy can also be a useful tool if your baby needs a little extra comfort after a feed and before settling back into their bed. Feeding Tips: 1. Take a break in feeding If your baby is crying with feeding or appears to be in discomfort, they could be consuming too much milk all at once. This is a cue to stop for a moment before finishing off the feed. If you're asking yourself, "how do I know my baby is not just full?" gently burp your baby and then proceed to feeding by offering the second breast or offering the remainder of the bottle. You will notice the sound she makes while feeding will change and there will be longer pauses in between suckling. This is a good indication that your baby is getting closer to completing the feed. 2. Burp them during feedings - and after! It's normal for a baby to need burping both mid feed and at the end of a feed. When they experience hiccups, you can hold them in an upright position and simply rub their back in circular motions to help relieve any air swallowed during feedings. 3. Wait for up to 20 minutes after each feed Keeping your little one in a comfortable position for 20-30 minutes after a feed will help them properly digest and pass any extra air. Playing with your baby right after can keep them happy and active but it's a good idea to avoid any heavy activity with your baby directly afterwards. 4. Find a calm and quiet space Breastfeeding will work best when you're completely focused and not doing anything else. If you are out and about, try to locate a calm and comfortable spot a bit before the feed is due. Your baby will generally pick up on your energy, so if you are rushing around and are unable to relax, chances are your baby won't be able to either. Try to relax before feeding to increase their interest in the feeding and ensure that you can complete a full feed without rushing them. If you are at home, find your favourite spot in the house and enjoy this moment with your little one. Will introducing solids help? Generally people think once the baby is six months old, and they start solid foods, that baby hiccups will more or less subside. That can be true for a lot of cases once your baby matures and they have started on their solid journey. However, if your baby continues to hiccup after their meals, this could be the result of the way they are eating and/or type of food. Like milk feeds, it's important to keep your baby upright for 30 minutes after feedings. You can also offer them a little water with their meals once they are over 6 months, as this can help to aid digestion. If you're worried about feedings with frequent burps or that of your baby or child, please consult with your medical professional. This way you can rule out any foods that might be triggering your little one's response. Nonetheless, Burping after eating or drinking is not uncommon at all - especially if they are fast eaters. This is where it is up to you to support your little one and the amount they are taking in during mealtimes and remembering to stop for breaks. A note from the editor Breastfeeding doesn't always come easy and it will take time for you to get into the rhythm of feeding your little ones. If you are ever experiencing any concerns or are finding it difficult, there are many great resources available. You can consult with your doctor, midwife, a lactation specialist or many of the wonderful online resources. During your first year as a parent, you'll experience your fair share of baby illnesses and other ailments. You'll also get the good stuff – a time where you get to watch first-hand all the cute stuff your baby does. When it comes to hiccups, responses are mixed – some parents react with an "aww," while others get worried. Baby hiccups aren't a reason to go to the emergency room, but as all adults know, they can be annoying. When we experience hiccups, we want to stop them as quickly as possible, but you might wonder how to get rid of baby hiccups. What Causes Baby Hiccups? No shock here, baby hiccups aren't that different from the kind adults get. Hiccups occur when the diaphragm begins to spasm. The diaphragm is a thin, skeletal muscle, sitting between the chest and abdomen – as we breathe, it moves up and down (1). Once the diaphragm starts to spasm, the vocal cords shut quickly. This forces excess air out through them, triggering that known hiccup sound. It's still unknown exactly why hiccups occur. The diaphragm works on the brain's command, so when hiccups happen, the brain tells the membrane to shift downward forcefully. However, why it sends those signals is still a mystery (2). Most babies tend to get hiccups while eating. This can happen if your little one overfeeds, swallows excess air, or eats too fast. Any of these can cause your baby's tummy to expand, which pushes it against the diaphragm. That can cause spasms resulting in hiccups (3). At other times, babies get hiccups out of the blue. In such cases, you may consider the three following causes. Other Causes of Baby Hiccups 1. Temperature Changes Sometimes sudden changes in stomach temperature can trigger hiccups. It may occur if you're feeding your baby cold milk followed by something warm, or vice versa. It's generally not a cause for concern. 2. Gastroesophageal Reflux (GER) If you notice that hiccups are often accompanied by distress, it could be an underlying condition like gastroesophageal reflux, or GER. GER occurs when food that's been partially digested moves back up the food pipe, together with stomach acids. Due to the acidity, the upward moving food irritates the diaphragm, triggering spasms and resulting in hiccups. GER is rarely a severe issue for babies, and it typically resolves itself after 12 months of age. As long as your baby is growing, content, and happy, there's no need for worries (4). If you're concerned, consult your pediatrician. Sometimes, though, hiccups can occur during episodes of painful reflux, called gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) (5). Other alarming symptoms that require a doctor's visit are listed below. Call your doctor if your baby: 3. Removement of Excess Air In a 2012 study, it was suggested that hiccups could occur as a way to remove excess air from the stomach. According to that study, when your baby feeds, the air they swallow enters the stomach, triggering spasms. The diaphragm then forcefully moves downward, releasing the air, much like a burp. How to Treat Baby Hiccups 1. Burping While feeding your baby, taking frequent breaks to burp them might help stop the hiccups. Since an expanding stomach may cause hiccups, it's a good idea to try to minimize this. Burping will get rid of most of the excess gas and air that could trigger this annoyance (6). It's best to burp during feeding as opposed to after (7). If you're breastfeeding, try burping your baby every time you switch breasts. If your little one is bottle-fed, take time to burp every 2 to 3 ounces, or at least half way through the feeding for very vigorous eaters. Burping is also beneficial if your baby tends to spit up. Placing them in an upright position may prevent GER (8). 2. Try a Pacifier Feedings are not always the cause of baby hiccups. Sometimes, they will start spontaneously. If this occurs, a pacifier might help. As your little one sucks on the pacifier, it relaxes the diaphragm, which can stop the hiccups. If you don't have a pacifier, use your little finger. Just ensure you clean it thoroughly before. Turn your hand palm-side up, allowing the nail-free side to rest on the roof of your baby's mouth (9). If your little one isn't soothed by sucking, don't force it. The hiccups are likely to stop soon. 3. Gripe Water Gripe water is a mix of water and selected herbs such as ginger, chamomile, fennel, and cinnamon. You can offer your baby some should the hiccups cause discomfort or distress. Although there are no studies to prove it's a successful way of getting rid of baby hiccups, it's worth a try. Gripe water is often used to treat colic as well as other tummy discomforts in babies. Clinically, I have found that there are a variety of versions of "gripe water." Some of my parents even mention a type that is "from their country," recommended by another family member. While it is important to be mindful of the ingredients, in general, I do not find that gripe water is effective or helpful. Therefore, I do not recommend gripe water for my patients (10).Editor's Note: Dr. Leah Alexander, MD, FAAP 4. Wait It Out If the hiccups aren't annoying you or your baby, you don't have to do anything about them. Most of the time, hiccups bother the parents more than the baby. As long as the hiccups are not caused by something more serious, they'll resolve soon enough. If your baby seems uneasy, they may just be unsure what the hiccups are. The best thing to do is talk or sing to your baby, walk around, or rock them. Distractions work well when dealing with babies. What Not to Do with Baby Hiccups 1. Don't Startle Them A sudden scare is an old remedy that many believe gets rid of hiccups successfully. However, it's not a good method to try on babies. A baby's neurological development isn't fully capable of processing unknown sounds, which is why small babies get startled by loud noises. 2. Pull Their Tongue Some people think that pulling your baby's tongue while pressing on the forehead will stop the hiccups. We don't recommend this. It's unproven to work, and you could hurt or distress your little one. 3. Serve a Glass of Water Water is often a go-to remedy when combating hiccups. However, you should limit the amount of water you give your baby. If your little one is under 6 months, avoid giving anything other than breast milk or formula (12). 4. Switch the Infant Formula There are many formulas on the market with claims from their manufacturers purporting that they solve a variety of infant "problems." This leads some parents to believe that a formula change will reduce hiccups. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Changing the infant formula will make no difference in the frequency of hiccups (13). Are Hiccups Bad for a Baby? Baby hiccups are common during their first year of life. Some babies even get them while still inside the womb. Although you probably won't notice it, it's not unusual for babies to hiccup as early as the first trimester (14). So, hiccups aren't bad for your baby – they're a natural reaction to something occurring in their tummy. Hiccups are so natural many babies will sleep through a bout without noticing. It's often us parents who feel distressed or annoyed by that frequent "hic" sound. When to Worry About Baby Hiccups When the hiccups become increasingly frequent, lasting longer than usual, take note of how long each bout lasts and the time between them. Consult your pediatrician with the results to verify if intervention is necessary. Another cause of concern is when the hiccups begin to interfere with your baby's sleep. When the bouts are so severe they keep your baby awake, it's time to call the doctor. We always recommend contacting your pediatrician if you feel concerned, especially if you feel that your baby is experiencing pain during hiccups. This could be a sign of infant GERD. In adults, chronic hiccups can be signs of damage to the nervous system, tumors, kidney disease, and even diabetes (15). These aren't typical causes of baby hiccups, but it's worth a check if you're worried. How to Prevent Hiccups Preventing baby hiccups isn't always easy, particularly when they occur out of the blue. Still, here are some ways you can try: Keep calm when feeding: When you're getting ready to nurse your baby, ensure that they're relatively calm. The best way to do this is to feed them before they're starving and crying anxiously for food. Place in an upright position: After you've finished feeding your little one, place them in an upright position, similar to when you're burping them. Keep them like this for about 20 to 30 minutes after each meal. Wait without tummy time: Avoid doing tummy time right after a feeding. Wait at least 30 minutes to let the food settle down. Hold the play: Wait at least 30 minutes before you begin playing with your little one after feeding. The Takeaway Baby hiccups are a common occurrence. The earliest a baby might experience a hiccup is during the first trimester in the womb. Baby hiccups are caused by diaphragm spasms, which can be triggered by overfeeding, air in the stomach, or even temperature changes. Getting rid of baby hiccups is easy by burping during feedings or using a pacifier. Often the problem will resolve quickly on its own. If you have concerns, always contact your pediatrician. Meanwhile, the next time your baby has the hiccups, get out your phone and start recording. They'll laugh years from now when they see it.

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