

Belching and Hiccups

What is happening

Belching and hiccups are common symptoms in many people, but during serious illness they can sometimes become:

- Persistent
- Uncomfortable
- Interfere with eating, sleeping, or comfort

These symptoms are often related to stomach irritation, swallowed air, or slowed digestion.

Common causes

Possible causes include:

- Gas-producing foods:
 - Beans
 - Onions
 - Garlic
- Carbonated drinks or soda
- Anxiety causing increased swallowed air
- Heartburn or reflux
- Slow stomach emptying
- Medication side effects

What you may see

- Frequent burping or belching
- Repeated hiccups
- Fullness or bloating
- Discomfort after eating
- Interrupted sleep or eating

What you can do

Adjust food and drinks

- Avoid foods or drinks that worsen symptoms
- Avoid carbonated beverages if they seem aggravating
- Try smaller, more frequent meals instead of large meals

Positioning

- Raise the head of the bed or sit more upright after eating

Over-the-counter treatments

Some products that may help include:

- Simethicone (Gas-X)
- Antacids such as:
 - Tums
 - Gaviscon
 - Roloids

Special drinking devices designed for hiccups may also help.

Medications

Medications may be used to:

- Reduce stomach acid
- Treat anxiety that may worsen symptoms
- Improve stomach emptying

The hospice team may also recommend prescription medications if symptoms are severe or persistent.

Review medications with the hospice team if symptoms began after a medication change.

When to call hospice

- Hiccups continue for more than an hour and are difficult to control
- Pain develops with belching or hiccups
- Vomiting is not improving with medications
- Eating or sleeping becomes difficult because of symptoms
- You are unsure whether medications may be contributing