

# AM I NORMAL?

OUR BODIES ARE AMAZING – but they also do some pretty strange things. Our experts break down the “hows and whys” of several common oddities.



## THE ISSUE:

### A LEAKY BLADDER

If you've ever experienced a little bit of bladder leakage when you've coughed, sneezed or jumped, you're not alone. Known as stress incontinence, this activity-related bladder leakage is common among women and is caused by several factors, including aging, childbirth, hormonal changes as we age and genetics.

## THE ISSUE: EXCESS EARWAX

Ear wax is produced by skin glands in the ear canal and functions to protect the eardrum from dirt and infection, as well as minimize potential trauma that could be caused by sound. Like sweat glands and hair follicles, the amount of earwax produced varies from person to person – and whether you have a little or a lot, it's perfectly natural.

**THE FIX:** Many women endure it by wearing a pad at all times, carrying extra underwear or just avoiding activities that could cause leakage. Pelvic floor exercise (also called kegels) can be helpful for some women. See if you can stop the flow of urine on the toilet. Once you've identified the right muscles, practice contracting and relaxing those muscles several times a day (not while emptying your bladder).

**WHEN TO SEEK HELP:** “Our OB/GYN doctors partner with urologists to help patients who deal with incontinence,” says **Laura Dean, MD**, obstetrician/gynecologist with **Stillwater Medical Group**. “You should definitely seek help if your incontinence is interfering with your lifestyle.” Several surgical and non-surgical treatments are available, and physical therapy can also be helpful for some individuals.

**THE FIX:** The best thing you can do for earwax is leave it alone – it will usually clear up naturally in the shower. “We don't recommend using cotton swabs or other tools inside your ear,” says **Terrence Tuominen, MD**, an ear nose and throat specialist at **Westfields Hospital & Clinic** and **Amery Hospital & Clinic**. “Placing things into your ear can damage your eardrum.”

**WHEN TO SEEK HELP:** Conditions like swimmer's ear, eczema, diabetes or a small ear canal can also cause excess earwax to be problematic. If you notice pain, pressure or hearing loss, a doctor can irrigate your ear to determine if those problems are caused by earwax or other ear issues.



## THE ISSUE:

### HIC-HIC-HICCUPS

Hiccups are an unintentional muscle spasm that occurs intermittently in our breathing muscles. This abrupt muscle contraction causes a sharp intake of breath that leads to the characteristic 'hic' sound.

**THE FIX:** Certain activities – overeating, drinking carbonated beverages, swallowing air, sudden temperature changes or excessive alcohol ingestion – may bring on the hiccups. Some reports suggest that sudden excitement, laughing or emotional stress can also bring on hiccups. “There really aren’t any scientifically proven methods to get rid of hiccups,” says **Anna Cox, MD**, Internal Medicine doctor at **Stillwater Medical Group**. “But, you might have fun trying some of these home remedies.” If nothing else, you may momentarily forget your hiccups!

- **Holding your breath**
- **Gargling ice water**
- **Swallowing granulated sugar, hard bread or peanut butter**
- **Biting on a lemon**
- **Being frightened (“BOO!”)**
- **Smelling noxious odors**
- **Sneezing**
- **Pinching your upper arm**

**WHEN TO SEEK HELP:** Most bouts of hiccups are nothing to worry about. However, hiccups that last more than 48 hours should be evaluated by your doctor, as these persistent hiccups can sometimes be indicative of an underlying medical problem.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT TREATMENT OF ANY OF THESE CONDITIONS, PLEASE TALK WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER OR CONTACT:

AMERY HOSPITAL & CLINIC - (715) 268-8000 / [AMERYMEDICALCENTER.ORG](http://AMERYMEDICALCENTER.ORG)

HUDSON HOSPITAL & CLINIC - (715) 268-8000 / [HUDSONHOSPITAL.ORG](http://HUDSONHOSPITAL.ORG)

STILLWATER MEDICAL GROUP - (651) 439-1234 / [LAKEVIEWHEALTH.ORG](http://LAKEVIEWHEALTH.ORG)

WESTFIELDS HOSPITAL & CLINIC - (715) 243-3400 / [WESTFIELDSHOSPITAL.COM](http://WESTFIELDSHOSPITAL.COM)

## THE ISSUE: AN ITCHY MOUTH



Many people with seasonal allergies are also affected by oral allergy syndrome, which can cause an itchy or prickling feeling in your mouth after eating certain foods. Essentially, the same immune reaction that occurs when we breathe in pollen can happen when we eat foods that mimic that pollen.

**THE FIX:** If you think you may have oral allergy syndrome, try avoiding the foods that can cross-react with your specific allergy.

**BIRCH:** kiwi, apples, pears, peaches, cherries, carrots, hazelnuts and almonds

**GRASS:** peaches, celery, tomatoes, melons and oranges

**LATEX:** bananas, avocado, kiwi and papaya

**RAGWEED:** bananas, honeydew, cantaloupe, watermelons and tomatoes

**WHEN TO SEEK HELP:** “Most cases of oral allergy syndrome are mild. However, “some oral allergy syndrome cases can be life-threatening, so we recommend a skin test for allergies,” says **Jennifer Koziol Wozniak, MD**, an allergist at **Hudson Hospital & Clinic**. “We can then develop a care plan to help avoid any potential serious reactions.”

## THE ISSUE:



### A FREQUENTLY FLUSHED FACE

Blushing occurs when capillaries, the smallest blood vessels in your face and neck, become wider or dilate. This dilation occurs involuntarily through the action of the sympathetic nervous system which is triggered during stress, or embarrassment. “Some people have capillaries that dilate more readily in moments of high emotion,” says **William Manzel, DO**, family medicine physician at **Stillwater Medical Group**. “While we’re not sure why some individuals blush more often, it may be genetic.”

**THE FIX:** While most people must simply learn to deal with blushing – or even embrace it – cognitive behavioral therapy can be tried to help those whose frequent blushing is affecting their lives.

**WHEN TO SEEK HELP:** Excessive blushing can be a sign of a disease called carcinoid syndrome, especially if accompanied by wheezing, diarrhea or hives.