



Give the Perfect Gift

by Lisa Shaw

With Christmas just around the corner, people are facing the inevitable dilemma of gift giving. There are always those people who are the last to be crossed off of your list – co-workers, neighbors, mother-in-laws, bosses – the people whom you are obligated to exchange gifts with, yet the atypical relationship that you share with said acquaintances makes present-purchasing a nearly impossible feat. But all of that has changed with the newest innovation to go on the market, a revolutionary new machine that will not only rid you of one of the most common medical afflictions of our time, but will also serve as a wonderfully practical yet not-too-impersonal gift. Claiming a money-back, guaranteed-satisfaction policy, the Hic-Cup is the new device that will cure your hiccups and get you out of your gift-giving slump.

The product looks simple enough – a stainless steel drinking cup with a three-inch brass rod attached to one side of the rim. But how the Hic-Cup works is actually a fairly complex process, involving ion flow and nerve stimulation. Before delving into that explanation, however, it's necessary to first understand what hiccups are, and secondly what causes them to occur. So, to begin with – a hiccup is, by definition, a “quick, involuntary inhalation that follows a spasm of the diaphragm and is suddenly checked by closure of the glottis, producing a short, relatively sharp sound.” Or, if you prefer the 1800s definition – a classic sign that you are possessed by Lucifer himself. Although there is not one root cause of these pesky inhalations, what is known about the trigger of hiccups has to do with two specific nerves: the vagus and the phrenic. The vagus nerve begins at the brainstem and continues down through the body to the abdomen, hitting the neck and jugular foramen on the way down. Because of its impressive extension, it is arguably the most important nerve in the body. The phrenic nerve, on the other hand, is comparatively shorter but serves an integral function in relation to the diaphragm, as it provides “sensory innervation” for many components of the abdomen region, and shuts down the diaphragm when the body undergoes serious stress. When either of these nerves are irritated, hiccup complications can result.

To combat these nerve irritations, the Hic-Cup developers explain that their product uses “natural galvanic action” to produce “a mild ion flow ... that initiates a sub-sensory bio-electric therapy. The liquid in the Hic-Cup is also Ionized by the galvanic action, adding to the potential for successful stimulation of the responsible nerves. It is believed that the ‘hiccup’ nerves are ‘re-set’ by this natural ion flow that you cannot feel, and that this reliably ends the distressing spasms.” A fairly technical procedure, the company assures the public that there is absolutely no risk, claiming that “the amount of energy produced is so low it cannot be felt and is totally safe. It is thousands of times lower than common static electricity you get every day from carpets and plastics.” Harmless to use for both children and adults, this invention is perfect for those on your list who are a pain to shop for, as it is practical, quirky, and useful.

But if for some reason the Hic-Cup cup is unsuccessful in hiccup eradication, don't panic – the at-home remedies list that accompanies the product is surprisingly comprehensive. It amazed our researchers to find that there are over 300 different folk remedies for hiccups, categorized by difficulty, popularity, and uses of outside apparatus. Although it's tempting to reprint the lists in their entirety, a few abbreviated ones will suffice.

First, we have most commonly used cures:

1. Eat 1 teaspoon of peanut butter.
2. Relax and breathe from your diaphragm.

3. Have someone scare the hiccups out of you.
4. Stick out your tongue and pull on it.
5. Talk to someone about not having hiccups.

These timeless strategies have been sworn by for hundreds of years by millions of people, each one claiming that their method is the best. While none of these singular techniques have earned that title, each one enjoys its own high rate of triumph.

Continuing on with this poll, I also came across some responses of methods that I had never heard before, but am curious to test out. They included:

1. Put a knife in a glass of water (blade end into the glass); drink the water without breathing, while keeping the handle of the knife constantly pressing against your face. (This one could count as a scare tactic.)
2. Think of all the bald men you can. (Scaring while distracting – it could work.)
3. Say “pineapple.” (Disrupting the nerve patterns by obnoxiously vocalizing the same word repeatedly – a good idea, though you might be friendless before you’re hiccup-less.)
4. Smell the fumes from a lighted candle. (This is just preposterous.)
5. Eat a dill pickle while you lie on your back with your mouth wide open; let your head hang over the edge of a couch or bed; breathe deeply and slowly. (I wonder what would happen if a sweet pickle was used in place of a dill?)

And then, there are those select few that just seem downright dangerous.

1. Have someone deliver a swift punch to your abdomen.
2. Sing along to your favorite CD while standing on your head and drinking a glass of water and wait it out.
3. Jump out of a plane.

All three lists are supplied, though not necessarily endorsed, by the Hic-Cup company, in the rare occasion should arise when the product is not performing at its best.

It is also important to note the uncommon instance of “intractable hiccups,” which can be a very serious affliction. Having the hiccups continuously for over 48 hours usually red flags a major medical issue, which may or may not pertain to problems with the central nervous system, problems in the body’s chemistry for kidney functions or hyperventilating, irradiation of the nerves in the head, neck or chest, or just your general garden-variety mental health problems. Should this happen to you or a loved one, it is strongly advised that you discontinue using the Hic-Cup device and seek professional medical attention.

Finally, the last perk that makes this gift a hit is the promise of satisfaction. To quote the manufacturer, “Buy and try The Hic-Cup with the comfort of knowing that your purchase and our product is backed by a 100% Money Back Guarantee. Hiccups can be caused by many reasons and some cases can be difficult to treat. If for any reason you are not satisfied or it can’t stop your hiccups, all you need to do is contact us and we will accept the product back no questions asked.”

So, I’ll leave you with this advice for the winter season: purchase a Hic-Cup cup for all those people still left on your Christmas list, and wish everyone you know some hiccup-free holidays!