



# HEALTHY LIVING SECTION

Weekly tips and advice from your neighborhood Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge providers.

## A Dietitian's Guide to Healthy Eating This Holiday

Eating healthy around the holidays can be challenging, especially when you're expected to attend celebrations loaded with diet pitfalls. Here are some tips for enjoying a healthier holiday season:

- 1 Eat your favorite meat and vegetables first.** Not only will this help slow down the absorption of carbohydrates into your bloodstream, but it will also fill your stomach so you will be less likely to overeat on breads, potatoes and dessert. You can also bring a veggie tray to munch on while the food is being prepared. Vegetables are only 25 calories for ½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw.
- 2 Bring your favorite recipe to the gathering** that you know keeps your blood sugars low.
- 3 Use recipe replacements to reduce the calories in your favorite holiday dishes (no one will know the difference!):**
  - Replace white sugar with a healthier substitute like honey or stevia.
  - 2 egg whites = 1 egg. Great to use in baked goods.
  - Replace oil with unsweetened applesauce. This is great in baked goods as well.
- 4 Skip foods that are not worthy.** If you can have a roll at any time, then pass on it and enjoy something that you can only have once or twice a year.
- 5 Allow yourself to eat one more additional carb for the special occasion,** but still use caution. That way you won't feel deprived.
- 6 Take a walk after the meal with a friend or family member.** It's a great way to catch up with them and burn some calories in the process.
- 7 Use a smaller plate. If you fill up a small plate, your mind feels satisfied.** It's a mental game, but it works!
- 8 Excuse yourself after eating to go brush your teeth.** This will prevent you from wanting to eat more at the moment. You can also carry sugar-free gum and use it instead.
- 9 Drink water with your meal.** This allows you to taste your food better and will also help fill up your stomach. Some studies have found that soft drinks – whether regular or sugar-free – can stimulate your appetite and cause you to overeat.
- 10 Remember that the holidays are for gathering with family and friends and enjoying each other's company.** It doesn't mean that we need to have excess food.

These tips will help you enjoy the holidays and prevent you from gaining the five or more pounds that are typical this time of year.

### Black-Eyed Pea Gumbo

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 medium green bell pepper, chopped
- 5 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup brown rice
- 4 (15 ounce) cans black-eyed peas with liquid
- 1 (10 ounce) can diced tomatoes and green chiles
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat, and cook the onion, pepper and celery until tender. Pour in the chicken broth, and mix in rice, black-eyed peas with liquid, diced tomatoes and green chiles, diced tomatoes, and garlic. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and simmer 45 minutes, or until rice is tender. Add water if soup is too thick.

**Serves: 8**



Black-eyed peas are actually beans and, like other legumes, are high in soluble fiber (about 5 grams per 1/2 cup) and a decent vegetarian source of protein (about 6 grams per 1/2 cup).

### Everyone Has a Cure

A 100-percent proven cure for the hiccups does not exist, but ask anyone and they probably have a remedy they swear by, such as breathing into a paper bag, being scared, drinking water upside down or swallowing a spoonful of sugar (not recommended for diabetics).



### All About Hiccups

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You probably have never heard of Charles Osborne, but he is the listed record holder for the longest case of the hiccups – a total of 68 years. This record is practically unimaginable as most hiccup attacks only last for a few minutes and in extremely rare cases can go on for months.

No one knows the exact purpose hiccups serve, but what causes them is known. Humans have a thin strip of muscle that sits below our lungs and extends the width of our torso called the diaphragm. Hiccups occur when the diaphragm spasms, which causes air to be quickly sucked in, but almost immediately after this, our vocal cords close, shutting off the air supply and creating the well-known "hic" sound.

Our diaphragms can be prompted to spasm by numerous factors, and to help figure out the cause they are separated into two categories: cases that last less than 48 hours and cases that last longer than 48 hours.

The short-term cases are most often caused by drinking carbonated beverages or too much alcohol, eating too much, excitement or emotional stress, sudden temperature changes, and swallowing air while chewing gum or sucking on candy. Hiccup attacks of this sort usually resolve on their own, sometimes with the help of a home remedy.

If your hiccups last longer than 48 hours or they cause problems with your eating, sleeping or breathing, make an appointment with your doctor, because your hiccups are most likely a sign of a more serious issue, such as damage or irritation to your central nervous system and certain metabolic disorders or drug use. Going back to Mr. Osborne, he fell while weighing a hog and damaged a small part of his brain that stops the hiccup response.

As previously mentioned, long-term cases are extremely rare, but can be treated with medications and surgery, injection of an anesthetic to block nerve response, and in very serious instances, implanting a small, battery-operated device that delivers mild electrical stimulation.

Hiccups might not be as innocent as you thought anymore, but their irritating nature will probably never be in doubt. Feel free to try any potential cures you can find next time the hiccups strike, but if they last more than 48 hours, seek professional help. You can call us at 828-580-4010 if you have any questions.

