

# Health Tips

Your Good Health Information From eDocAmerica

with

Dr. D



Printer Friendly



Click Here!

to forward this Health Tip to a friend

## Health Tip: Medical Mysteries (and other interesting tidbits)

A number of the ideas for "Health Tips" come from messages that eDoc clients submit. Questions sometimes relate to topics that are so unusual that they require considerable thought to answer. Often these are medical issues that are neither taught in medical school nor likely to be encountered in years of medical practice. Today's Health Tip was inspired by some of those questions. Topics, that while perfectly reasonable to ask, do not have obvious answers.



### 1. Why do yawns seem to be contagious?

Has this ever happened to you? You see someone yawn and you're next. It's almost like you "caught" the yawns. This is one that is really not well understood, but it appears to have to do with one's ability to relate to someone else's emotional state. In other words, being susceptible to contagious yawning has to do with how much empathy you feel for others. One way that this hypothesis was tested was to show autistic

children video clips of people yawning. While this visual stimulation would typically cause non-autistic children to yawn, autistic children, known to have difficulty feeling empathy, were relatively immune to contagious yawning.

**2. What causes people to sneeze when they walk into the sun?** Up to 35% of people have a genetically inherited trait that causes them to sneeze when they walk into the sun. Rather than producing just a single sneeze, the "photic sneeze reflex" often results in a series of sneezes. This paroxysm of sneezing is sometimes known as the "ACHOO syndrome". One explanation for this occurrence is that a cranial nerve, known as the trigeminal nerve, runs alongside the optic nerve that carries visual information to the brain. "Cross talk" from the optic nerve to the trigeminal nerve appears to set off sneezing.

### 3. What purpose do goosebumps serve?

Goosebumps go by a number of common names, including goose flesh, goose pimples, and chill bumps. The medical term for goose bumps is cutis anserina. Goose bumps are created when tiny muscles at the base of each



eDocAmerica  
Services  
Overview

Click  
HERE...

Unsubscribe



If you wish to [unsubscribe](#) from any eDocAmerica mailings, please click on the image above.

### Register Now

If you have not yet used eDocAmerica to communicate with our physicians, we urge you to give it a try. Email us about this or

any other topic or question you have!



hair contract and pull the hair erect. The chain of events leading to this skin change is usually triggered by cold, excitement, or fear. In

response to cold, goosebumps help animals with fur trap air to create a layer of insulation. When threatened, goosebumps caused hairier animals to appear larger and more intimidating. In humans, however, goosebumps do not appear to serve any useful purpose.

**4. What's so funny about the funny bone?** If you've ever struck your "funny bone", you know that it's inappropriately named. It's not funny at all. In fact, it's downright painful. The structure that is responsible for "funny bone" pain is actually a nerve (ulnar nerve). This nerve lies fairly close to the surface of the skin and when struck, often sends an "electric shock" down the forearm and into the little finger. One theory is that the name "funny bone" comes from the Latin word for the upper arm bone, the humerus .



**5. What causes brain freeze?** Brain freeze, also known as "ice cream headache", occurs after eating cold foods or beverages too quickly. It develops when a cluster of nerves (sphenopalatine) in the hard palate of the mouth is rapidly chilled. When this happens, blood vessels within the brain constrict and then dilate, similar to what happens with a migraine headache. The pain itself is "referred", or felt in an area distant from where

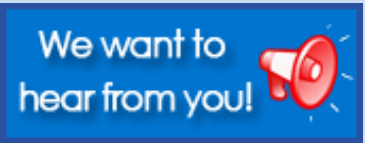
the palate was chilled, often behind the eyes or in the forehead. The pain usually resolves in a few excruciating minutes. The best way of preventing "brain freeze" is to consume cold food or liquids at a slower rate.

**6. Why does my nose run after eating?** Many people have experienced their noses running after eating spicy foods, but few know that this has a medical name and explanation. The condition is known as "gustatory rhinorrhea", which is defined as a "watery nasal discharge associated with stimulation of the taste buds". In some people, this reflex is exaggerated, and occurs after eating practically anything, not just spicy foods. Gustatory rhinorrhea may even be triggered in certain individuals by preservatives or dyes in food. While more of a nuisance than a "disease", when the nasal discharge is profuse, it can be embarrassing and unpleasant. In these cases, treatment with a nasal inhaler called Atrovent or taking an antihistamine medication may lessen the symptoms.

Hopefully, you have found these tidbits informative. But, more importantly, we hope you realize that our eDocs are happy to provide answers to whatever questions you might have regarding your sometimes mysterious body.

Click on the 'Ask eDoc' icon, to the right, login, and send any questions you may have.

We would love the opportunity to assist you.



---

**Have you ever used eDocAmerica?**

To register, just [Click Here](#) and follow the simple directions. The entire process should take less than 5 minutes.  
You'll be glad you did.



11719 Hinson Road, Suite 130 Little Rock, Arkansas 72212

Toll Free 1-866-525-eDoc (3362) [www.eDocAmerica.com](http://www.eDocAmerica.com)

Copyright 1999-2009 eDocAmerica. All rights reserved. Patent Pending. [\[click here to unsubscribe\]](#)