

4 health quirks explained

Have you ever wondered what causes spontaneous itches or why you sometimes wake up with a headache? Find out the reasons behind four of your body's mysterious itches and twitches



Web exclusive: November 2009

Itches

Itches seem to happen at the most inopportune times, don't they? And **nobody really knows why spontaneous itches occur**, says Dr. Peter Vignjevic, a dermatologist based in Hamilton, Ont. However, we do know why scratching relieves the sensation. "When we scratch, it stimulates sensory nerve endings, overpowering the input to our brain from the itch receptors or nerves in the skin, so the brain perceives the scratching and not the itch," Vignjevic explains.

Persistent itchiness is most likely a sign that you're suffering from dry or irritated skin (an all too common ailment during Canadian winters). Avoid scratching yourself raw by **applying moisturizer or a cold compress or by taking lukewarm baths to soothe the skin.**

If you're experiencing a whole-body itch that interferes with your sleep or persists for more than one week, it's time to seek medical help, advises Vignjevic. **Itching that's accompanied by a fever, night sweats, weight-loss, swelling or jaundiced (yellow-tinged) skin should also be seen by a doctor immediately.**

Related:

- 5 habits you thought were healthy but aren't
- Is your computer damaging your eyes?
- 5 strange-but-true health cures

Look Great

Beauty
Hair
Makeup
Skin

Get Healthy

A-Z Index
Diabetes
Fitness
Health
Home Remedies
Outdoor Fitness
Prevention
Resolutions
Weight Loss

Eat Well

Cooking
Diet
Healthy Eating
Nutrition
Recipes

Embrace Life

Home and Family
Life and Work
Mental Health
Relationships
Sleep
Wellness

Community

Blog
Forum
Success Stories
Where You Live
Magazine

Subscribe

Give a gift

Advertisers

Rates & Guidelines

Best Health Magazine
© 2008.-2009 Reader's Digest Magazines (Canada) Ltd.

[About us](#) | [Customer Care](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [RSS](#)