

Snap, crackle and pop

Rice Krispies cereal and our bodies have one thing in common, they both make snap, crackle and pop sounds. Have you ever won-

dered why?
Snap

A snapping sound in a joint is most often caused by a tendon (tissue that connects muscle to bone) rubbing against the bone or tissue. When a joint like the shoulder, elbow or ankle joint moves, the tendon's position changes and can lead to a snapping sensation and sound.

Snapping of a tendon in the shoulder, or ligaments (tissue that connects bone to bone) in the ankle, often occurs when the joint is out of position. For instance, if your chest muscles are too tight, caus-

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ing your shoulders to slouch, you are more apt to hear and feel your shoulder tendon snap. Likewise, ankle snapping may be affected by loose ligaments.

Crackle

Bending down to pick up any item can lead to a cracking experience. These sounds may be a result of chondromalacia, or arthritic changes to the knee joint.

Chondromalacia, the softening of the cartilage on the underside of the knee cap, causes irregular gliding of the knee cap, cracking, and contributes to pain and irritation of the knee. Young women are most likely to experience chondromalacia due to structural changes that occur in their legs during rapid growth and correlated excessive and uneven pressure to the muscle surrounding the cartilage.

Arthritic changes of the knee may cause cracking or grinding sounds when the knees are bent or straightened. Progressive degeneration of the joint carti-

lage contributes to the cracking or grinding sound — bone rubbing on bone. Grinding of the knee joint most often affects the middle-aged and elderly.

Pop

All of the joints in our bodies contain a joint capsule — connective tissue that surrounds the joint — which holds a clear, viscous joint lubricant called synovial fluid.

When a knuckle joint is stretched it causes an increase in space between tissue and a decrease in pressure, leading to the nitrogen gas found in the synovial fluid which forms bubbles — a process called cavitation. As the knuckle joint stretches further, pressure drops so low that the bubbles burst, producing a popping sound.

Once you have popped your knuckles, it usually takes 25-30 minutes for the gas to dissolve back into the synovial fluid. When this occurs, knuckle popping is possible again. However, is it advisable to continue to pop your knuckles?

"It's bad for your joints," chastises your mother for popping your knuckles,

In Shape



Surveyor Columnist
Caroline Creager

but is it really harmful? According to research conducted by Raymond Brodeur, a bio-medical expert, a correlation between arthritis and knuckle-popping was not found, however habitual knuckle popping did result in soft tissue damage and decreased grip strength.

"But mom, cracking my knuckles feels so good," my son frequently declares. So, why is this? Evidence suggests that when knuckles are popped, stimulation of nerve endings occur and muscles surrounding the joints relax. Immediately following the popping sound, joint mobility or flexibility increases, which provides an invigorated relaxed feeling.

The snap, crackle and pops of the body may cause pain or lead to an energized feeling. If you are concerned about the sounds your body makes, or you experience pain with the snap, crackle or pop sounds, you should discuss this with your physician or physical therapist. Meanwhile, enjoy your breakfast.

Cone Zone Ahead

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Healthy stomach, healthy life

Marsha, a quiet 40-something accountant, entered my office, obviously distressed and clearly skeptical that I could help her. She had been suffering from loose stools for about three months, and it was really starting to get in the way of her enjoying life. Nothing she tried was working, so wherever she went she always had to be on the lookout for — you guessed it — a toilet.

And if she wasn't sure there would be one nearby, she would opt out of joining her husband, or make excuses to her friends as to why she couldn't come along.

After carefully listening to Marsha describe her condition, I asked her if anything had happened about three months ago, and indeed, something rather stressful regarding her in-laws had. I assured her that I could help her since I had seen great results with many other patients having all sorts of digestive complaints from constipation to diarrhea, from acid reflux to abdominal pain and cramping.

Although I suspected her recovery would take more than one treatment, I was certain that she would soon be get-

ting her life back to normal.

In addition to acupuncture treatments, I prescribed a Chinese herbal formula intended to get to the root cause of her condition. Within two weeks, Marsha reported that she was feeling better and that her bowels were starting to return to normal. She told me she couldn't believe that she suffered with this "silly" condition for so long — had she only known where to look.

Ancient Chinese doctors revered a healthy digestive system as tantamount to good health. A famous physician from around 1600 A.D. proclaimed, "The stomach is the nourishment of life itself. If the stomach is strong, life will be healthy; if the stomach is weak, life will be unhealthy."

From my experience, many problems, including aches and pains, being overweight, stress, chronic infections and allergies can often be traced back to issues with the 23-foot tube that runs from the mouth to the anus called the gastro-intestinal tract.

I have seen how debilitating digestive disorders are, and how frustrating and expensive it can be for people who look

everywhere but find no relief. Also, many people are now becoming aware that solutions like Tums merely cover up symptoms and can often lead to even more problems, including osteoporosis.

I'm still surprised sometimes how well natural things like acupuncture, herbs and diet modification can be in helping restore the digestive system back to balance.

Thad Ekdahl is a licensed acupuncturist in Colorado and graduated with honors from a master of acupuncture and Oriental medicine program at Southern California University of Health Sciences. His passion is helping people restore body-mind balance naturally and gently.



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