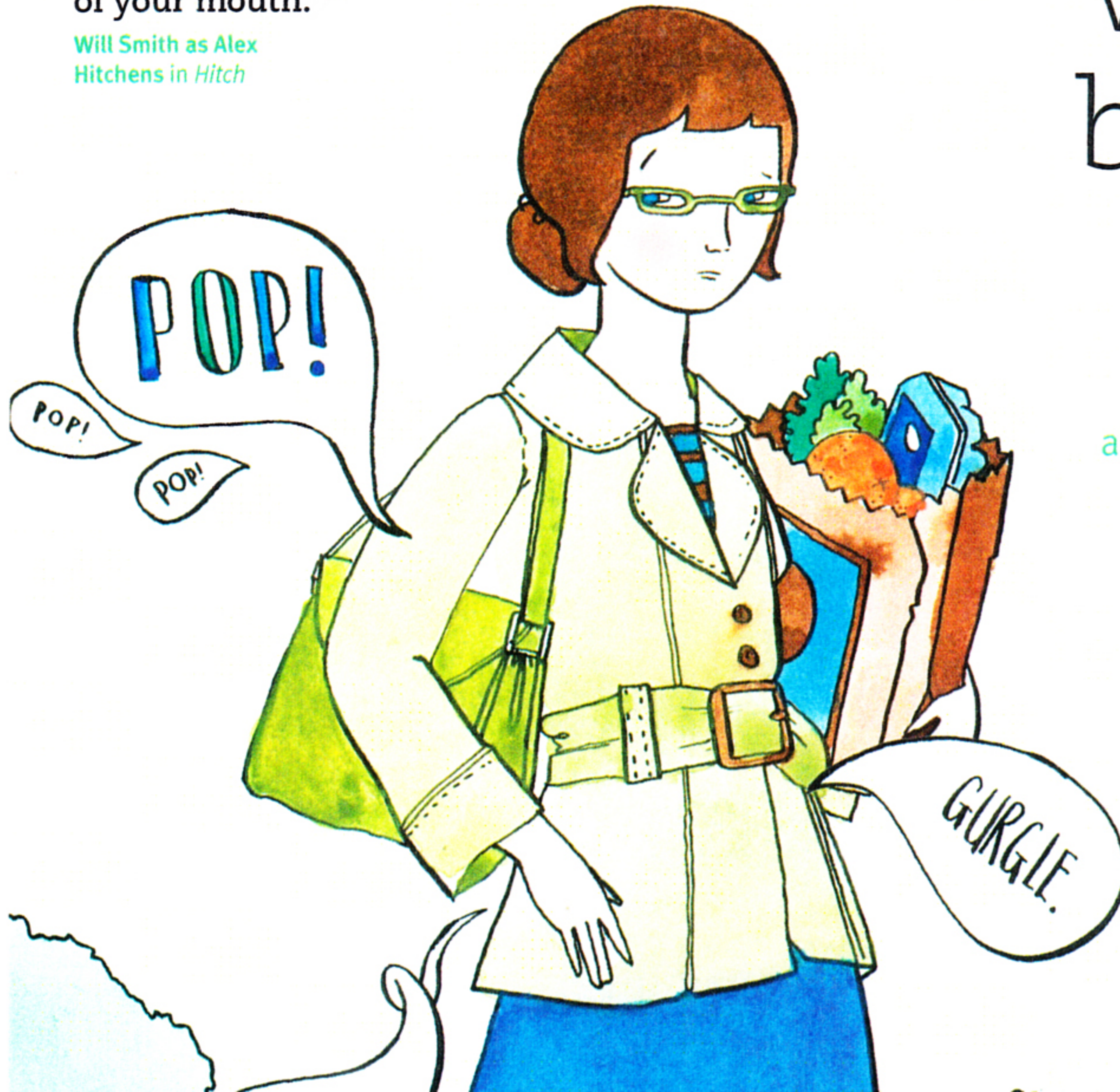


Ninety percent of what you're saying ain't coming out of your mouth.

Will Smith as Alex Hitchens in *Hitch*



what's your body trying to tell you?

Every pop, ping, ache, and pain has a meaning. **Here's when to take action.**

PERHAPS YOUR JOINTS crack as you get out of bed. Or your calf cramps while you're driving. Maybe the toothbrush turns pink when you're brushing. You might wonder if your body is just blowing off steam, hinting that things are not quite right, or if it's launching a full-scale rebellion. "Provided that you're listening closely, your body can provide good warnings that something is amiss," says Lynne Shuster, an internal-medicine physician and the director of the women's-health clinic at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Armed with the following expert insights, you can crack your body's secret code.



snoring

Most likely causes: Being overweight or having nasal or sinus problems (like a deviated septum, nasal polyps, or allergies) can lead to swelling that partially blocks the airway, increasing the chances that the tissues in the back of your throat will shake, rattle, and roll while you sleep.

Less likely cause: You may have obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), a condition in which snoring is accompanied by brief pauses in breathing as you sleep.

What to do:

- To keep the airway as open as possible, sleep on your side so your throat tissues don't collapse.
- Breathe Right nasal strips (available at drugstores) can help widen nasal passages so you can breathe more easily.
- If your snoring is keeping you or your partner awake, consult a sleep specialist to find out if OSA may be to blame.



cracks at the corners of your mouth

Most likely causes: Excessive lip licking or exposure to the wind, cold, or dry air can dry out the lips and lead to cracks in their very thin skin. Another culprit: a deficiency in iron, vitamin A or C, or any of the B vitamins.

Less likely causes: Cracks may be a sign of a fungal infection, such as thrush, which also causes redness around the cracks. Or the cracks may be due to a slight allergic reaction to an ingredient in a cosmetic product you recently started using.

What to do:

- Keep your lips hydrated by applying a thick, unscented ointment (such as Aquaphor).
- If you recently started using any new cosmetics, stop, then slowly reintroduce them one at a time.
- If the cracks persist, worsen, or seem infected, see a doctor to talk about your diet or to be tested and treated for a fungal infection.



dark urine

Most likely causes: When you don't drink enough water, the pigments in waste that the kidneys excrete are more concentrated, so your urine becomes a deep yellow. Dark urine can also mean you have a urinary-tract infection, which could be sending a small amount of blood into your urine and making it darker.

Less likely causes: A bladder or kidney infection can also cause darker urine, as can renal stones and other kidney problems.

What to do:

- Drink more water. Try this easy rule. Figure your height in inches. That number is the minimum amount in ounces you should be drinking per day. So if you're five-six, that's 66 inches, or 66 ounces.
- See your doctor if the color of your urine doesn't fade, you have a fever or pain with urination, or you urinate with an unusual frequency or urgency.

I have what??

(continued)

- **Epistaxis:** A bloody nose.
- **Eructation:** Burping.
- **Expectoration:** Coughing up phlegm or mucus.
- **Hypertonia:** Muscle tension.
- **Onychomycosis:** Fungal infection of the nails.
- **Pruritus:** Itching.
- **Tachycardia:** A rapid heart rate.
- **Tinnitus:** Ringing in the ears.
- **Xerostomia:** Dry mouth.



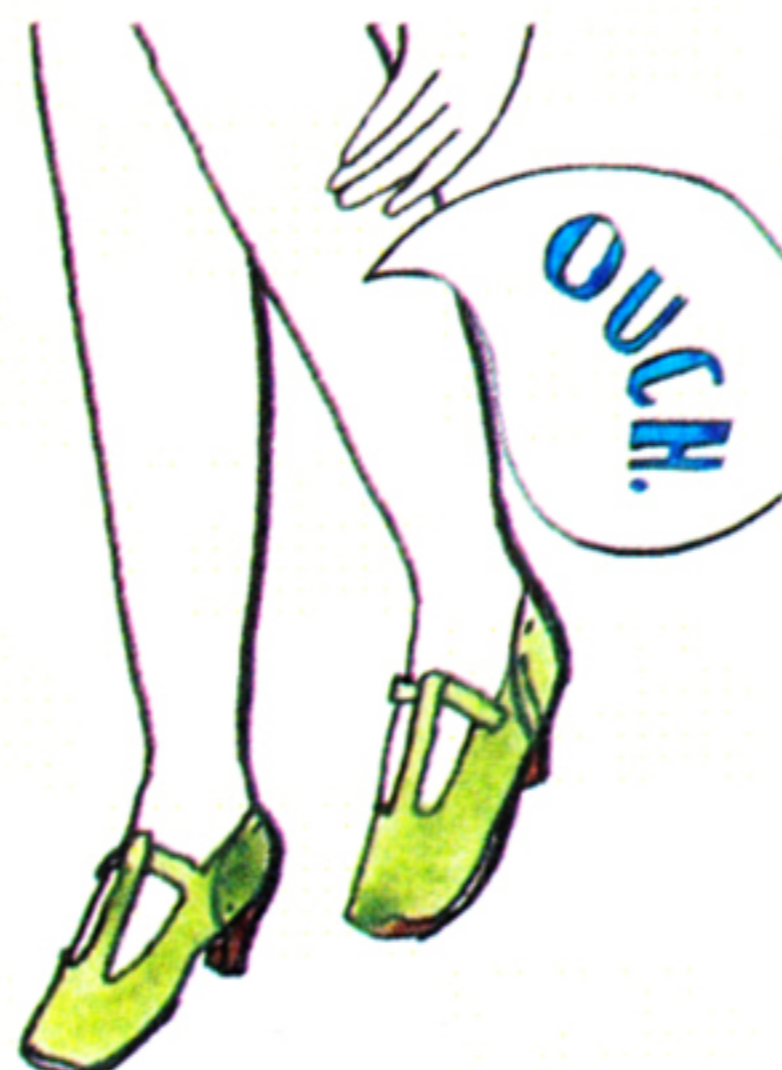
a chronic cough

Most likely causes: Something is tickling your throat, and a cough is your body's reflexive way of trying to expel the irritant. It may be postnasal drainage from allergies, or you may have hyperactive nasal mucus membranes sending liquid down your throat. Acid reflux can also irritate the throat and trigger coughing.

Less likely causes: Airway spasms are a side effect of some drugs, such as ACE inhibitors. Chronic obstructive lung disease (often due to smoking), pulmonary fibrosis (which involves scarring of the lungs), or a heart-valve problem can also produce coughing if fluid accumulates in the lungs.

What to do:

- Schedule a checkup and discuss any other symptoms you may have to help your doctor figure out what's going on. He will probably listen to your lungs and heart and may order a chest X-ray. Treating the underlying condition should stop the cough.



muscle cramps in legs

Most likely causes: Sitting or standing for too long in one position, or a long day in high heels, can strain the muscles in the calves and lead to cramps, sometimes hours later or during the night. Dehydration or an electrolyte imbalance can also cause muscles to spasm.

Less likely causes: Statins, anti-convulsants, antihistamines, estrogens, and osteoporosis drugs can cause muscle cramps as a side effect. Blocked or narrowed arteries can also decrease blood flow to the legs, causing cramps.

What to do:

- Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated, and eat foods rich in the electrolytes calcium, potassium, and magnesium, such as leafy greens, bananas, and beans.
- Choose low, well-supported shoes to avoid straining the calves.
- Stretch your legs after walking, exercising, sitting still for a long period, or wearing high heels.



night sweats

Most likely causes: Hormonal fluctuations can alter the body's internal thermostat, making you sweat as you sleep. A thyroid disorder can also cause night sweats.

Less likely causes: Some drugs, including antidepressants, have this side effect. Certain diseases, such as cancer, lupus, and a major infection (like tuberculosis), can also leave you dripping at night.

What to do:

- Lower the temperature in your bedroom at night by opening a window or using a fan.
- Moisture-wicking sleepwear and sheets (in a microfiber material) can make a sweaty episode more tolerable.
- If the sweats don't abate or aren't linked to your menstrual cycle, talk to your doctor to rule out an illness.
- If the problem is hormonal, hormone therapy or a low-dose oral contraceptive might help.

I have what??

Some medical terms sound so ominous, you would think they indicate certain death when, really, that's hardly the case. Below, the med-speak for some common health issues.

- **Anomia:** Having trouble thinking of an object's name.
- **Blepharospasm:** Eyelid spasms.
- **Borborygmus:** Stomach rumbling.
- **Bruxism:** Tooth grinding.
- **Diaphoresis:** Excessive sweating.
- **Dysuria:** Difficult or painful urination.
- **Ecchymosis:** A bruise.
- **Edema:** Fluid retention.

(continued on following page)

tip Wear well-fitting shoes that aren't too tight in the toe box. Scrunching up your toes all day can cause calf cramps later.