

MUSCLE CRAMP INFORMATION

Here's a complete muscle cramp guide that may prove helpful. Pull out from it what will benefit you the most.

A muscle cramp is a sudden contraction of one or more of your muscles. The result can be intense pain and an inability to use the affected muscles. ***Cramps or the muscles such as calf, hamstring, even feet can occur during an exercise as well.*** The principles to prevent and deal with are the same as for nighttime cramps. See below.

Nighttime Leg Cramps

Nighttime (or nocturnal) leg cramps are usually sudden spasms, or tightening, of muscles in the calf. But the muscle cramps can sometimes happen in the thigh or the foot. They often occur just as you are falling asleep or waking up. These painful cramps can last a few seconds to a few minutes. ***These leg cramps are also called charley horses.***

What causes nighttime leg cramps?

Though nighttime leg cramps are common, experts don't know exactly what causes them. But most of the time it is not because of illness. Some of the things that may cause leg cramps include:

Getting too much exercise or overusing the muscles.

Standing on concrete for a long time, sitting for a long time, or putting your legs in awkward positions while you sleep.

Not having enough potassium, calcium, and other minerals in your blood.

Being [dehydrated](#), which means your body has lost too much fluid.

Taking certain medicines, such as antipsychotics, [diuretics](#), [statins](#), and steroids.

Having flat feet.

Having thyroid disease.

How can you stop a leg cramp when it happens?

You may need to try several different ways to stop a leg cramp before you find what works best for you. Here are some things you can try:

Walk around, or jiggle your leg.

Stretch your calf muscles. You can do this stretch while you sit or stand:

While sitting, straighten your leg and flex your foot up toward your knee. It may help to place a rolled towel under the ball of your foot and, while holding the towel at both ends, gently pull the towel toward you while keeping your knee straight.

While standing about 2 ft from a wall, lean forward against the wall. Keep the knee of the affected leg straight and the heel on the ground. Do this while you bend the knee of the other leg. These exercises stretch your calf muscles, and you will probably feel the leg cramp go away after a few minutes.

Ankle rolls (inward/outward) and wiggling of the feet help foot cramps.

Some people find that a hot shower or a warm bath helps.

Massaging above and below the site of the muscle cramp is helpful too to bring blood flow to the site to release the muscle contraction. Others get relief by gently rubbing the calf with an ice pack, especially if inflammation is present.

How can you prevent them?

Drink plenty of water and other fluids during the day.

Limit or avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine. These can make you dehydrated, which means your body has lost too much fluid.

Make sure that you balance the body's levels of electrolytes by eating healthy foods that are rich in calcium, potassium, and magnesium or take a supplement that supplies these minerals.

Magnesium sources: nuts, whole grains, dark green vegetables, seafood, and cocoa, halibut

Calcium sources: milk and milk products (including yogurt and cheese), certain leafy, green vegetables (broccoli, spinach, kale), fortified cereals, in legumes, and in some nuts

Potassium sources: sweet potato, bananas, yogurt, yellowfin tuna, soybeans, orange juice, cantaloupe

(At least start with a multi-vitamin if not taking one already; or take separate calcium complex of calcium+magnesium+vitamin D - for better absorption)

[Stretch](#) your leg muscles for a few minutes before you go to bed. Specifically calf stretches, hamstring stretches are extremely important as well as ankle rolls (inward/outward) will help too. See above.