



## Muscle Cramps

### Causes

A **mineral deficiency** of **calcium** and/or **magnesium** is probably the most frequent cause of night leg cramping. Cramps are often caused by a **lack of potassium**, resulting in an electrolytic imbalance. Strenuous exercise with sweating and diarrhea or other bowel disease may cause loss of potassium and other important minerals. It is very important to replace them with supplements. Some people get leg cramps at night for no apparent reason. This is called **restless legs syndrome**.

Another cause may be a **deficiency in hesperidin**, one of the bioflavonoids (sometimes called vitamin P), naturally occurring nutrients usually found in association with vitamin C. These bioflavonoids, including Hesperidin, Citrin, Rutin, Flavones, Flavonols, Catechin and Quercetin, were found to be essential in correcting the **night leg cramps**.

### Tips

- To stop leg/foot cramping, firmly **press in on the upper lip**. This is the meridian which is connected to the legs and feet.
- Take a **hot shower** before going to bed, letting the water run down the part of your leg that gets cramps. Or, if you get cramps in the night, take a shower then. Get the water as hot as you can stand it, as this will help relax the muscles.
- If you are in bed when you get a leg cramp, **stretch your leg** straight out and bend the toes back toward your head. Hold in this position for 30 seconds, relax, and repeat until the cramp is gone. This will stretch out your calf muscle. You may also do this standing up - push your heel onto the floor and bend your toes upward. This forces the calf muscle to lengthen.
- If you get leg cramps frequently at night, start a **stretching regimen** before bed. Try pressing your toes against a wall to stretch out the calf muscles; hold for 30 seconds, relax, repeat several times.
- Cramping often comes while you are exercising. follow these tips:
  - Keep **hydrated**. As you sweat, you lose important electrolytes, which are needed to prevent cramps.
  - **Warm up** for 10-15 minutes before exercising. This will stretch out the muscles you will be using.
  - If you exercise and get cramps after **eating**, you have probably begun your exercise too soon after eating. As you digest, your body diverts blood from your muscles and cramping can result.
  - Take magnesium, potassium and calcium supplements daily, especially before exercising.

## Remedies

### Folk

**Apple cider vinegar** Drink a mixture of two teaspoons of vinegar and one teaspoon of honey in a glass of warm water. Apple cider vinegar is high in potassium.

**Aspirin** (or ibuprofen) taken at the earliest signs of **menstrual cramps** will help relieve them. Aspirin helps stop the production of prostaglandins, part of the process that causes cramps.

**Calcium** A calcium deficiency causes muscle cramps or involuntary movement of muscles. If you are prone to leg cramps at night, take a calcium supplement (calcium lactate is preferred), a warm cup of milk, or chew on some Tums an hour before going to bed. However, we do not recommend taking Tums on a regular basis due to its interference with your normal digestive process. We suggest that if you get frequent leg cramps you take a calcium supplement daily. Taking magnesium with the calcium will aid in the absorption of the calcium and prevent calcification of various organs and soft tissues. 200-300 mg of calcium before bedtime is recommended.

**Chamomile tea** A study showed that drinking five cups of this tea each day for two weeks reduced the pain of **menstrual cramps**. The tea increased the level of glycine in the urine. Glycine is an amino acid that helps relieve muscle spasms and relax the uterus.

**CoQ10** may aid in relieving muscle cramps.

**Magnesium** will help the smooth muscles that surround your arteries to relax, and your body uses it to process calcium. Try taking 400 mg of magnesium before bed. A calcium/magnesium supplement, taken one hour before bedtime, is recommended.

**Mustard** For years coaches have given mustard to their athletes with leg cramps. Cramps are sometimes caused by a deficiency in acetylcholine, the neurotransmitter that stimulates your muscles to work. Mustard has acetic acid, which helps the body make more acetylcholine. Take a spoonful or two of mustard.

**Pickle juice** As with mustard coaches have given pickle juice to their athletes with leg cramps. Cramps are sometimes caused by a deficiency in acetylcholine, the neurotransmitter that stimulates your muscles to work. Pickle juice has acetic acid, which helps the body make more acetylcholine. Take a few ounces of pickle juice.

**Quinine/tonic water** Drinking four to eight ounces of tonic water (make sure it has quinine in it!) an hour before going to bed is a very effective remedy for most people. If it is too tart for you, add some lemon for flavoring. You should notice a difference within a few days, otherwise discontinue. OTC quinine was banned by the FDA because of health risks, but there is enough quinine in tonic water to help most people. See the Hyland's homeopathic remedy below for another similar option.

## Homeopathic

**Leg Cramps with Quinine** by Hyland's. Take as directed. This remedy contains: *Cinchona Off.* 3X HPUS, *Viscum Alb.* 3x HPUS, *Gnaphalium* 3X HPUS, *Rhus Tox.* 6X HPUS, *Aconitum Nap.* 6X HPUS, *Ledum Pa.* 6X HPUS, *Magnesia Phos.* 6X HPUS.

**Mag Phos**, by Hyland's. Take 4 pellets under the tongue at bedtime.