

## Muscle Cramps

Muscle cramps occur when muscles involuntarily contract and cannot relax. What makes the problem more frustrating is that the muscles most prone to cramp are the skeletal muscles, over which we usually have the most control. Sometimes the calf, thigh or arch of foot muscle may just give a warning twitch or two but usually the muscle will get hard and cause intense pain until it resolves on its own. Most muscle cramps are not serious but they are a real pain.

Anyone can develop a muscle cramp at any time. I know people who rarely have a cramp, (I am so lucky to be in that group.) and others who seem to have cramps all the time. I have several clients who get foot or calf cramps frequently, when I work on them, and I feel so sorry for them. For them, I did some research, looking for any causes or cures that we have not discussed and tried yet.

Nobody seems to know exactly why muscle cramps develop. I found the usual insufficient stretching before exercise, exercising in the heat, and muscle fatigue. Imbalance of the levels of electrolytes (sodium, potassium, chloride, calcium and phosphate) in the blood can also lead to muscle cramps.

I read about muscle spasms at WrongDiagnosis.com. There is a list of 248 diseases that cause muscle spasms and another list of 206 drugs that list muscle spasms as a side effect. YIKES! If you are a constant crammer, I suggest you look at these lists to see what causes may apply to you.

[http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/sym/muscle\\_spasms.htm](http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/sym/muscle_spasms.htm)

I found a lot of information on a medical condition I never heard of before. Claudification is intermittent leg pain that usually appears during walking and is painful enough to cause limping. It usually subsides quickly with rest but as the condition progresses the pain may become constant.

The pain is caused by inadequate blood flow to the leg muscle or muscles affected. If intermittent, it can be caused by a temporary spasm of the artery. Once again, I did not discover what would cause the artery to spasm. Maybe you can find that on the disease or drug side effects lists. Maybe it is not dangerous or easily corrected with a change of medication.

Claudification is also caused by narrowing or complete blockage of the artery to the leg. Intermittent claudification often stabilizes or improves with increased walking. A program of increased walking will encourage development of new small blood vessels that bypass the area of obstruction. The drug pentoxifylline (brand name: Trental) decreases the stickiness of blood and improves its flow to the legs. Cilostazol (brand name: Pletal) dilates the arteries and reduces clotting.

Using a stethoscope, a doctor may suspect that your arteries have narrowed by listening to the blood flow in them. The pulses in the legs and feet should be checked and any differences between blood pressure in arms and legs should be evaluated using a Doppler/ultrasound exam. To determine the extent of the blockage an arteriography can be used to visualize the arterial blood flow.

If medication is inadequate, balloon angioplasty can widen the arteries. Stints can be placed to hold them open afterwards. Bypass surgery can replace the blocked arteries with pieces of open arteries from elsewhere in your body.

Your doctor may also do tests to see if arteries in other parts of your body have atherosclerosis. The coronary arteries are the blood vessels that supply blood to the heart muscle. If they spasm due to blockage by fatty buildup, the blood flow to parts of the heart can be reduced or stopped. Heart damage

or death may result. Narrowed or blocked arteries to the brain can cause stroke damage or death.

Elevated total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels are connected to the acceleration of atherosclerosis, a major cause of claudication or peripheral artery disease. High blood pressure also causes an increased risk of developing claudication or peripheral artery disease, heart attack and stroke.

There are many medications to lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels in the blood. If you have either or both of these conditions, you should be under a doctor's care, taking prescribed medication and having frequent checkups.

Dietary changes, increased exercise, stress relieving programs and nutritional supplements can also improve both conditions. I also read about a 100% liquid blend of pure [EDTA \(Ethylene-Diamine-Tetra-acetic-Acid\) Chelation](#) which, when taken orally, is supposed to absorb rapidly into the circulatory system, cleaning out all the veins and arteries. I have no idea if it works or not. Do your own research and check with your doctor before trying it.

In conclusion, there is no easy conclusion as to what causes muscle cramps. There are far more factors than I suspected. I would certainly suggest taking them seriously enough to speak to your doctor about them. Go over the lists at WrongDiagnosis and discuss with your doctor any connections you find there.

Patricia Kenworthy © June 2007