

Muscle Cramps and Spasms

Muscle cramps are a common problem in athletes, seniors, and people with walking abnormalities due to injury. They are typically worst at night and may wake you up when you are sleeping. The most common causes of muscle cramps are dehydration, vitamin deficiency and muscle imbalance secondary to abnormal walking. We should all drink at least 8 cups of water a day. If we drink caffeine this dehydrates us and we need to drink at least one extra cup of water for every cup of coffee. Most importantly we need to consume vitamin supplements such as Potassium 4,700 mg per day. High potassium in some foods are leafy greens, potatoes, bananas, and salmon. Too little potassium can cause abnormal heart rhythm, weak muscles, and minor risk in blood pressure. The recommended dose of magnesium for women 320 mg and 420 mg for men, some foods with high levels of magnesium are dark leafy greens, legumes, nuts, and whole grains.

Muscle tissue relies in part on a range of minerals, electrolytes and other chemicals in order to contract and relax. When you exercise, you sweat out the vitamins that your muscle needs. And that deficiency causes muscle contractions or spasms, which we call cramps. To understand what causes toe, foot, and calf muscle cramps we need to know how muscles work. All muscles work in pairs. In order for them to work properly, as one muscle (agonist) contracts, the other (antagonist) relax to allow a smooth controlled movement. If the antagonist muscle doesn't relax properly, cramps develop. Toe cramps also frequently stem from unnecessary strain or restricted blood flow from tight-fitting shoes.

It's very important to stay hydrated, reducing your stress levels and getting enough sleep are simple ways to prevent muscle cramps and spasms. If you feel cramping getting worse and not relenting, you should talk to a doctor. Frequent foot cramping may signal an underlying medical condition involving the circulation or central nervous system. Tonic water has a small amount of Quinine sulfate which can be very helpful in preventing cramps. You should drink 2-3 cups/day but best to try when you mix with juice or Gatorade. Quinine Sulfate tablets are very helpful but no longer sold in the U.S. but can be ordered from a Canadian pharmacy. Very rare cases of heart problems have been reported.