

## Muscle Cramp

You are late for your workout again! On the way you frantically think up excuses – coach will be mad! Finally, you come rushing in 15–30 minutes late. Your group has long since started and warmed up and now on the first exercise.

### Excuses

Not wanting to waste time with excuses, you rush to change. You immediately start a half hearted warm-up in order to catch up with the others. Then, during the session, you grab your side with a stitch, or fall to the floor. You realize that you have a really bad cramp.

Muscle cramps are nothing new, nor are they limited to the world of athletes. You can get cramps simply because you slept wrong the night before. There are many things that can cause cramps, but there are simple ways to prevent this.

**CAUSE:** *Overexertion.*

Remember, your muscles need time to rest. Your muscles will not have time to recover and will start to spasm if for instance you play football every day – sometimes twice a day.

**CURE:** Make sure you give yourself ample rest time. Do not play football every day, or even 2 times a day!

**CAUSE:** *Dehydration / Lack of vitamins.*

Vitamins, are key to helping prevent muscle cramps. Also remember that a large percentage of your muscle tissue is water. If you are dehydrated, you will cramp up that much more easily.

**CURE:** Ensure that you are drinking plenty of water throughout the day, not just before your workout. If you have doubts as to whether or not you are dehydrated, examine the colour of your urine the next time you go to the bathroom. If it is clear, you are properly hydrated. If it is a dark yellow, or worse yet you can't even remember the last time you had to go to the bathroom, start consuming water immediately. Also avoid commercial fizzy drinks and coffee.

They will dehydrate you faster than not drinking anything at all. A good rule of thumb is: if you are going to have a fizzy drink or cup of coffee, immediately consume twice the amount you drank in water. Also make sure that you are eating enough fruits that are high in Potassium. Bananas are probably the best for this.

**CAUSE:** *Lack of stretching / warm-up.*

For most people, this one is obvious. However, you would be surprised by the number of people who start immediately, kicking a ball around, with no thought for the muscle groups they are using. Not only do they risk muscle cramps, they also risk tearing the muscle and causing permanent injury.

**CURE:** No matter how much of a hurry you may be in, always make the time to properly stretch and warm-up. Also when you start to kick the ball around, do it with less power to give you muscles a chance to warm-up. A warm-up should not tire your muscles out, however it should get the blood pumping to ensure proper circulation.

**CAUSE:** *Excessive heat / cold.*

This is probably one of the most common causes of muscle cramping, especially during the summer. When your body heat rises above what it can cool down, your muscles start to overheat. Think of it like a car engine without oil or water that is ran excessively. Like the engine, your muscles will seize up and fail to function. Likewise, in the cold, the muscles contract like running a car without anti-freeze.

**CURE:** This goes hand-in-hand with staying properly hydrated. Whenever your environment heats up more than usual, make a conscious effort to keep drinking water. If the area you are working out in is hotter than normal, you may want to slow down the pace and make sure you don't overheat. If the area is colder than normal, you may need to keep moving, stretch out regularly and in-between games.



**Summary:**

Dehydration is certainly one of the most common factors that contribute to muscle cramps, which are often coupled with large losses of minerals such as sodium, calcium and potassium through sweat. Fluid, mostly water, makes up more than 70 percent of the human body. Along with the loss of sodium—a mineral that initiates signals from nerves, which in turn leads to muscle movement—and other minerals, the loss of fluid in the human body may cause muscles to become irritable. When the muscles are irritated in such a way, any slight stress, such as movement, may cause the muscles to contract and twitch uncontrollably.

Another factor in muscle cramping may be flexibility. Most people tend to relate lack of flexibility and stretching to pulled muscles, however, if the muscle is tight, it tends to cramp a lot easier than other muscles.

The keys to preventing muscle cramps can be summed up as follows.

- Give yourself proper rest time
- Maintain good hydration and nutrition
- Make the time to warm-up and stretch before a game
- Be conscious of the temperature where you are playing
- By no means am I saying that you shouldn't work up a good sweat and train with speed and intensity. Just exercise a little common sense. Like the car engine, make sure your muscles are properly taken care of, and they will serve you well.

**QUININE SULPHATE is given to cramp sufferers by doctors.**

This medicine is mainly indicated for reducing the occurrence of nocturnal leg cramps, although it is also used against malaria, 'unknown' infective species and myotonia.

How it works is unclear, but it needs to be taken for up to 4 weeks until improvement may become apparent and then it must be taken regularly for continued benefit.

**Soda Water**

We can recreate Quinine with soda water as this chemical is produced during the carbonation process of the soda. Once you start drinking soda water daily, the level of quinine increases in your blood stream on a daily basis. If you stop drinking soda water even for 24 hours, the level drops rapidly and it will take several days to rebuild the level that is lost.

**Note:** Soda water is not considered to be a commercial fizzy drink!