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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Leg Cramps?

Have you ever been awoken at night from a nice deep sleep by agonizing pain in your lower leg only to discover you were having a painful muscle spasm? You are not alone. Many of my patients, particularly those over forty-five years old, have had this same experience. Fortunately, most of the people who suffer from this chronic problem can get relief by simply stretching your muscles more often.

Whenever you stand, sit, walk normally, or lay down, the muscles in your lower legs do not fully lengthen and shorten. Over time, this can make the overall flexibility of these muscles very poor. Then, when you are in bed and sleeping soundly, you inadvertently point your toes downward as you have a full body stretch. Then, wham! The muscle goes into a fully uncontrolled spasm (or contraction) jolting you out of bed. The same scenario can also occur in the muscles at the back of your thigh (the hamstring muscles). These muscles can also become vulnerable and, just like the lower leg, they can go into a fully uncontrolled spasm.

I have found firsthand that when my patients who regularly experience leg cramps begin a muscle stretching program, the severity and frequency of the episodes decreases dramatically or even completely. There is other more complicated and possibly even more serious causes of leg cramps. However, stretching your muscles properly is the most conservative initial approach to solving your problem. If doing the stretches does not seem to help, then other avenues should be explored.

Refer to the diagrams provided for instructions on how to perform these stretches safely. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me directly.



1) Stand on the first step of a flight of stairs or a block of wood. Put your hand on the wall. Put the "ball" of your right foot just on the edge of the step. Slowly lower your right heel towards the floor until you feel a stretch in the back of your lower leg. DO NOT bounce! Hold for ten seconds and repeat four times per side.



2) Lie on your back and bend the left knee to ninety degrees and plant the foot on the floor. This will stabilize your lower back. Lift the right leg up into the air, while the right knee is slightly bent. While holding the right knee with both hands, try to straighten it out until you feel a tightening sensation at the back of the leg. If it won't go all the way, that's ok. If you want to make it more difficult, point our toes back towards your face. Hold the stretch for ten seconds and repeat four times per side.