

# CRAMPS

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## SYMPTOMS:

Muscle cramps cause the following:

- Local [pain](#)
- Tenderness
- Firmness of the involved muscle

This disturbs the function of the involved extremity. When a hand muscle is affected, it can lead to difficulty in writing (writer's cramp) or grasping. When the muscles of the calf or foot are affected, it can lead to difficulty walking.

## FIRST AID:

### **Stretch**

- Most cramps can be stopped if the involved muscle can be stretched.
- Stretching can often be accomplished by standing up and walking around
- For a calf muscle cramp, the person can stand about 2-2½ feet from a wall (possibly farther for a tall person) and lean into the wall to place the forearms against the wall with the knees and back straight and the heels in contact with the floor.
- Another technique involves flexing the ankle by pulling the toes up toward the head while still lying in bed with the leg as straight as possible.
- For a writer's cramp (contractures in the hand), pressing the hand on a wall with the fingers facing down will stretch the cramping finger flexor muscles.

### **Massage**

- Gently massaging the muscle will help it to relax, as will applying warmth from a heating pad or hot soak.
- If the cramp is associated with fluid loss, as is often the case with vigorous physical activity, fluid and electrolyte (especially sodium and potassium) replacement is essential.
- Medicines are not generally needed to treat an ordinary cramp that is active since most cramps subside spontaneously before enough medicine would be absorbed to even have an effect.

### **Apply heat or cold**

- Use a warm towel or heating pad on tense or tight muscles.
- Taking a warm bath or directing the stream of a hot shower onto the cramped muscle also can help.
- Alternatively, massaging the cramped muscle with ice may relieve pain.