

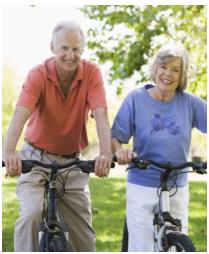


MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Extension

Senior Health Line

April 2017



Charley Horse



Charley horse, a cute name for a very painful experience. A Charley horse is another name for a muscle spasm or cramp. They can occur in any muscle, but most commonly occur in the leg and are marked by involuntary stiff muscle contractions and extreme pain. They tend to occur more as we age and while they can be very annoying and painful, they are seldom harmful. They can however be severe enough that the muscle involved can be sore for as long as a day.

There are a number of causes for developing these severe muscle spasms. One of the most

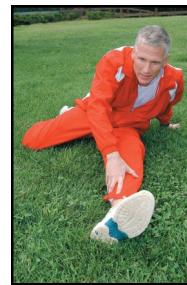


common is dehydration. To avoid muscle cramping, be sure to drink enough water throughout the day. This often reduces the incidence of Charley horses.

A lack of electrolytes is another cause of muscle cramping. Minerals such as calcium and potassium are essential for normal muscle movement. The best way to be sure you are not lacking these essential nutrients is to eat a lot of colorful fruits and vegetables. Taking excessive supplements of these nutrients can be harmful and is not recommended unless you are under a health professional's supervision. This may sometimes be necessary, however, if you are taking diuretics.

If you do not stretch adequately before

exercise, you may be setting yourself up for a Charley horse. Take time to stretch every day, even if you are not exercising.



Muscle cramping can also be a side effect of certain medications. Besides the diuretics mentioned before, that are used to remove fluid from the body, statins for high cholesterol can also lead to muscle cramping. Aricept, a drug used to treat Alzheimer's disease, Procardia, a medication for the treatment of high blood pressure and certain asthma medications can also increase the risk of suffering muscle spasms.

Over doing it can also increase this risk. If you exercise harder than usual, this can cause muscle cramps, especially if you suffer from poor circulation. If cramping increases while you walk, it may be an indication of a circulation issue that should be discussed with your health care professional.

One last possible cause of muscle spasms is wearing the wrong shoes. Shoes should fit snuggly but not too tightly and not rub on any part of your foot as you move. A good pair of shoes supports your arch and is comfortable to wear.

When a muscle cramp occurs, there are several things you can do to ease the pain. If it occurs when you are lying down, try standing up on the leg affected. Putting weight on the leg involved is sometimes enough to stop the cramp.

For a spasm in the muscles in the front of your leg, try holding onto a chair to keep your balance

and pull your foot back toward your buttock. Heat may also help as it increases circulation to the affected area. A warm heating pad or a warm bath may help in relaxing the muscles that are cramping up.

If leg cramps occur frequently, they are severe or you believe they are a result of medications you are taking, talk to your health care professional for guidance.

Clean eating



You may have heard the term clean eating, but may not know exactly what it means. Clean eating means eating real food in its least processed form. It is about eating more healthy options and less of the not so healthy ones. When you look at the food label, it should have few ingredients and, you should be able to pronounce every one of them. If you are eating clean, there should not be "stuff" in food that comes from a science lab. Not only should it have no added chemicals, but it should not be stripped of the natural products like fiber and vitamins.

Eating clean means embracing the whole foods, less processed grains and antibiotic free, hormone free meats, fats and dairy products. It encompasses cutting back on added sugars, salt and unhealthy fats in the diet and it also involves being mindful in what we eat.

So if you are interested in clean eating, look at the ingredients on the food label. How many ingredients are there in this product? Can you pronounce them all? Are the things you want to put into your body? Food creates the foundation for the structure and function of all cells in the body. Your body is in a constant state of maintenance and repair. Therefore, what you eat determines the health and function of your body.

Asparagus Frittata

3/4 pound fresh asparagus spears
6 eggs
3/4 cup low fat cottage cheese
2 teaspoons yellow mustard
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup fresh mushrooms, sliced
1/4 cup chopped tomato

Cook asparagus in a small amount of boiling water for 10 minutes. It should be crisp but tender. Drain. Cut all but 3 spears into 1 inch pieces. In a medium bowl, beat eggs well and then add in the cottage cheese, mustard and salt. Beat well. Spray a 10 inch oven proof skillet with cooking spray. Cook the mushrooms over medium heat until tender. Stir in the asparagus pieces that you cut. Pour the egg/cottage cheese mixture over the mushrooms and asparagus pieces. Place the remaining 3 asparagus spears on the top of the mixture. Cook over low heat for 5 minutes. The mixture should be beginning to bubble and set around the edge of the pan. Place in a preheated 400 degree F. oven, uncovered, for 10 minutes or until an instant read thermometer reads 160 degrees F. Remove from oven. Garnish with the chopped tomato. Makes 4 servings.

Nutrition Value per serving:

Calories 183
Protein 18 grams
Carbohydrate 7 grams
Total fat 10 grams
Sodium 375 milligrams



*MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer.
Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.*

*Senior Health Line written and edited by: Robin Danto, Michigan State University Extension—Oakland County, 248/858-0904, E-mail—dantor@oakgov.com
Web address—www.oakgov.com/msu*