

Muscle Cramps and Leg Pains

In any guard, there are bound to be injuries. If you or anyone is hurt at practice or whatever, you **MUST** tell your director immediately! If he/she isn't there, find an adult and tell them. These tips are just for reference, just in case your band director or adult doesn't know what to do. These are word-for-word directions on how to treat minor injuries from the Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook.

Leg and muscle cramps ("charley horse" or "stitch") are common. They often occur during exercise, especially during hot weather, or at night. Dehydration or low levels of potassium in the body may cause cramps, as can using a muscle that is not stretched well.

Pain in the front of the lower leg may be due to shin splits, especially if you have recently increased your exercise.

PREVENTION

- Warm up well and stretch before any activity. Stretch after exercise to keep hot muscles from shortening and cramping.
- Drink extra water before and during exercise, especially during hot or humid weather.
- Include plenty of potassium in your diet. Bananas, orange juice, and potatoes are good sources.
- To avoid stomach cramps ("stitches") during exercise, do side stretches before exercising and learn to breathe with your lower lungs.
- If cramps wake you up at night, take a warm bath and do some stretching exercises before bed. Keep your legs warm while sleeping.

TREATMENT

If there is pain, swelling, or heaviness in the calf of one leg only, or other symptoms that cause you to suspect phlebitis, call your doctor before attempting home treatment.

- Follow the prevention guidelines.
- Gently stretch the cramping muscle. Rub or massage the cramp.
- Straighten your leg, grab the foot, and pull it towards you to stretch the calf.
- Drink some extra water. Cramps are often related to dehydration.
- The best treatment for shin splits is ice, ibuprofen, or acetaminophen (Tylenol), and a week or two of rest followed by a gradual return to exercise.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

- If you have the following symptoms: Pain deep in the leg or calf; Heat, redness, or pain along the course of a leg vein; Swelling of one leg; Leg is white or blue and cold; Shortness of breath or chest pain.
- If leg cramps worsen or persist in spite of the prevention and home treatment.
- If cramps or leg pain occur repeatedly during even mild exercise, such as walking, even if relieved by rest.

...from Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook