

LEG CRAMPS IN PREGNANCY

Why are my legs cramping?

It's most likely because your leg muscles are tired from carrying around extra weight.

- ❖ Leg cramps may start to plague you during your second trimester and get worse as your pregnancy progresses.
- ❖ They may be aggravated by the pressure your expanding uterus puts on the blood vessels that return blood from your legs to your heart and the nerves leading from your trunk to your legs.
- ❖ While these cramps can occur during the day, you'll probably notice them most at night.

THEORY:

- ❖ You may have read that getting too little calcium and potassium can cause leg cramps, or
- ❖ that getting too much phosphorus (found in processed meat, snack foods, and soda) can have the same effect because it can keep you from absorbing enough calcium.
- ❖ But no good studies back up either of those theories.
- ❖ It's important to make sure you're getting enough calcium and potassium while you're pregnant.
- ❖ If you are interested in Natural Supplements, there is very good source:
The Village Green Apothecary, 5415 W Cedar Ln, Bethesda, MD 20814
(301) 530-0800

What can I do about these cramps?

Try these tips for keeping leg cramps at bay:

- Avoid standing or sitting with your legs crossed for long periods of time.
- Stretch your calf muscles (see below) regularly during the day and several times before you go to bed.
- Rotate your ankles and wiggle your toes when you sit, eat dinner, or watch TV.
- Take a walk every day
- Avoid getting too tired.
- Lie down on your left side to improve circulation in your legs.

- Stay well-hydrated during the day by drinking water regularly.
- Try a warm bath before bed to relax your muscles.

If you do get a cramp, immediately stretch your calf muscles: Straighten your leg, heel first, and gently flex your toes back toward your shins. It might hurt at first, but it will ease the spasm and the pain will gradually go away. You can relax the cramp by massaging the muscle or warming it with a hot-water bottle. Walking around for a few minutes may help, too.

What if the pain persists?

If your muscle pain is constant, or if you notice swelling or tenderness in your leg, call your practitioner.

In rare cases, a pregnant woman may develop a blood clot, which requires immediate medical attention.