



Cramps and Muscle Spasms

Relieving Muscle Tension the Natural Way

Muscles are supposed to contract. That's how they do their work. Muscles contract so we can walk, grab, lift, turn, and otherwise move. Contracting muscles also pump blood through the body, allow us to breathe, move food through the digestive tract, and regulate automatic processes in the body.

Muscles contract to do their work, but then they need to relax again. In the process of relaxing, muscles acquire an energy charge. Just as a nerve needs to rebuild its electrical charge before it can fire again, so a muscle needs to rebuild its energy potential by relaxing before it can contract again.

When muscles can't relax again after contracting, we experience cramps and muscle spasms. In fact, the more exhausted the muscles become, the more tense they become. Muscles that can't relax block the energy flow in the body. Spastic muscles prevent things from moving properly and can cause intense stabbing or shooting pains anywhere in the body. In Oriental medicine, such conditions were called "wind" disorders because of their erratic, changeable nature.

People with a lot of muscle tension have a hard time relaxing. Like a tired child who simply can't relax enough to go to sleep, tense people often run around on nervous, fidgety energy until they drop from exhaustion. On the other hand, relaxed people can actually hold a higher energy charge than tense people. They also find it easier to flow with life and are less rigid about things.

Muscle cramping and spasms can be involved in a wide variety of health problems including: hyperactivity, leg cramps, restless leg syndrome, neck pain, tension headaches, back pain, asthma, whooping cough, high blood pressure, constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, spastic bladder, gall bladder attacks, hiatal hernia syndrome, menstrual cramps, cramping and spotting during pregnancy, postpartum pain, and more. Fortunately, there are answers to helping muscles to relax, easing health problems created by muscle spasm and cramping.

One of the first keys to relaxing muscles is to increase intake of the mineral magnesium. When muscles contract, calcium ions flow into muscle tissues. As the muscle relaxes again, calcium is displaced with magnesium. Thus, the interchange between calcium and magnesium helps muscles expand and contract. Many people erroneously believe that taking calcium will help when muscles cramp, but the truth is that very few people are deficient in calcium in modern America, while 80-90% of the population is deficient in magnesium. No wonder most of us feel so "up tight" all the time!

Since muscles expend energy to contract and rebuild energy to relax, substances which help muscles rebuild energy will help muscles relax. Fibrilgia and Cellular Energy contain magnesium in combination with other ingredients that enter the energy produc-

ing cycle in the mitochondria of cells. Both of these products can help muscles rebuild energy charges and ease cramping and muscle pain.

Another answer to muscle spasms and cramps is a class of herbal remedies known as antispasmodics. This class of remedies relaxes muscle spasms, often by helping to balance the function of the nerves. One of the most powerful of these antispasmodic herbs is lobelia. Available in both capsule and tincture form, lobelia will rapidly relieve spastic conditions in the body, allowing muscle movement to flow smoothly again.

If one examines the many conditions lobelia has been successfully used to treat, one will quickly note the spastic nature of nearly all of these conditions. Lobelia has been used for asthma attacks, whooping cough, spastic cough, hiatal hernia, spastic bowel disorders, and angina. It has also been combined with capsicum or other herbs and applied topically to relieve muscle spasms and congestion. In larger doses, it acts as an emetic, meaning it induces vomiting.

Kava kava is a Polynesian herb that acts as a muscle relaxant and antispasmodic. It is a powerful remedy for easing pain caused by muscle tension. It can help back pain, neck pain, leg cramps, and arthritic pains. Although in Europe some isolated reports of liver toxicity from using highly concentrated extracts have caused this plant to come under criticism, it has a long history of safe use and is still a dependable antispasmodic remedy.

Black cohosh is another powerful antispasmodic remedy that often gets pigeonholed as a female herb. Its traditional use for asthma, tension headaches, arthritis pain, and high blood pressure related to muscle tension are often ignored.

Wild yam and cramp bark are two more antispasmodic remedies which can help relax muscle spasms. Both of these remedies are very helpful for relieving menstrual and intestinal cramps. They are combined with lobelia and black cohosh in the formula Cramp Relief. This powerful combination is not only useful for menstrual cramps, it is also helpful for intestinal cramping, spastic constipation, gall bladder attack, spastic bladder, back pain, restless leg syndrome, and other disorders involving muscle cramping and spasm.

With so many natural options available, there is no reason for anyone to suffer from muscle cramping or spastic muscle pain. A qualified natural health consultant can help you select the remedies that are best for you.

Selected References

The Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants by Andrew Chevallier
Herbal Therapy and Supplements by Merrily A. Kuhn and David Winston
The Book of Herbal Wisdom by Matthew Wood

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