

LEG CRAMPS IN PREGNANCY

Reviewed: October 2024

Leg cramps are short but painful muscle contractions. They are most common in the second and third trimesters of pregnancy. Causes include increased weight gain, changes in circulation, and additional pressure on nerves leading to the legs.



HOW TO HELP PREVENT CRAMPS?

- Get at least thirty minutes of exercise a day - even if it is a simple walk outside
- Stretch well before and after exercise, and before and after sleeping
- Avoid standing or sitting for long periods of time; change position often
- Wear comfortable shoes with low heels
- Avoid pointing toes or crossing legs
- Heavy blankets or comforters tucked into the end of a bed can cause toes to point and bring on leg cramps
- Stay well hydrated - drink at least 8 glasses of liquid per a day
- Eat more magnesium-rich foods: oats, rye, buckwheat, squash, pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, sesame seeds, tahini, sunflower seeds, dates, peanut butter, black eyed peas, kidney beans, bananas, walnuts, cashews, pecans, kale, and spinach
- Ask your doctor if magnesium supplement is recommended for you

STRETCHING:

Seated stretching: sit in a chair and raise one foot on a table/chair in front of you. Use a towel, blanket, or scarf to wrap around the bottom of your foot. Pull the material towards you slowly, stretching the lower calf muscles. Hold this for thirty seconds and switch to the other leg.

Standing stretching: Standing two to three feet facing a wall, put your hands on the wall, level with your shoulders. Lean forward into the wall while keeping your feet flat against the floor. Stop when you feel the stretch. Hold the stretch for thirty seconds.

WHAT TO DO DURING A LEG CRAMP

- Stand up
- Place feet flat against floor
- Jiggle affected foot
- Massage. Do not massage any hot, red, or tender areas on your legs
- Use heat, for example, heat pads

WARNING SIGNS!

Call your doctor immediately if you notice:

- One leg is **warm or hot**
- Your leg is **red** or has a change in color
- An area that is **tender or painful** to touch

LEARN MORE:

Mayo Clinic. Leg Cramps During Pregnancy. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/expert-answers/leg-cramps-during-pregnancy/faq-20057766>