Leg Cramps This Summer? Here's What May Help.

Leg cramps can have many causes, and what helps depends on when they're happening and whether there's an underlying condition.

Things you can try right away

- Stretch the muscle when the cramp occurs. For a calf cramp, straighten your leg and pull your toes toward your shin.
- Massage the area gently.
- Apply heat to tight muscles or ice if the muscle remains sore afterward.
- Stay well hydrated, especially if you've been sweating, exercising, or spending time in the heat.

Common causes

- Dehydration
- Overuse or muscle fatigue
- Sitting or standing in one position for long periods
- Low levels of electrolytes such as magnesium, potassium, or calcium
- Certain medications (such as some diuretics, statins, or blood pressure medicines)
- Poor circulation
- Nerve issues
- Medical conditions such as diabetes, kidney disease, or thyroid disorders

When to contact a doctor

Make an appointment if:

- The cramps are frequent or severe.
- They wake you up regularly at night.
- You have muscle weakness, numbness, or swelling.
- Home measures aren't helping.

Seek urgent medical care if you have:

- A swollen, red, warm, painful leg (possible blood clot).
- Sudden severe pain with weakness or inability to walk.
- Chest pain or shortness of breath along with leg symptoms.

SOURCE: INFORMATION ADAPTED FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS (AAOS), MAYO CLINIC, CLEVELAND CLINIC, AND THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC).