



## **Dealing With and Preventing Cramp**

Cramp can have any number of causes including nutrient/mineral imbalances, excessive exertion, a lack of circulation or pooling of blood. If you are experiencing cramp regularly, it is advisable to increase your calcium and magnesium intake. This can be done by regularly including banana, grapefruit, sesame seeds, cottage cheese, yoghurt, soybeans and almonds in your diet.

Using a heat pad or putting pressure on the cramping area may also bring relief. Some people find that icing the area can also help.

To help prevent cramps the following exercises should be practised a few times during the day as well as last thing at night.

### **Affected Area: Abdomen**

Suggested exercises:

- Supta Baddha Konasana: lie back with your knees bent and the soles of the feet touching each other. Completely relax and allow the knees to drop towards the floor – this opens the groin and releases the lower back.
- Viparita Karania: lie on the floor facing the wall. Work your buttocks to touch the wall, extending your legs up the wall as straight as possible. Remain as still as possible for a few minutes allowing the blood to circulate.

### **Affected Area: Lower Back**

Suggested exercises:

Swimming is highly recommended for most back problems as well as avoiding sitting for extended periods without moving around.

- Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward facing dog). Kneeling, place hands on the floor, palms down. Begin to straighten the legs, which lifts your hips up. You are forming an inverted 'V' shape with your hips being the apex.
- Uttanasana (standing forward bend...i.e. try to touch your toes!)

- Cat & Cow pose: kneel on hands and knees. Knees are under hips, wrists under shoulders. As you exhale arch your back tucking your navel and chin in. As you inhale reverse the back arch and tilt your chin up to the ceiling, repeat.
- Trikonasana (triangle): place feet 3½ to 4 feet apart. Raise your arms parallel to the floor and reach them out to the sides, palms down. Turn your left foot in slightly to the right and your right foot out to the right 90 degrees. Rest your right hand on your shin, ankle, or the floor outside your right foot, whatever is possible without distorting the sides of the torso. Stretch your left arm toward the ceiling, in line with the tops of your shoulders. Keep your head in a neutral position or turn it to the left, eyes gazing softly at the left thumb.
- Janu Sirsasana: sit on the floor with your buttocks lifted on a folded blanket and your legs straight in front of you. Bend your right knee, and draw the heel back toward your perineum. Rest your right foot sole lightly against your inner left thigh, and lay the outer right leg on the floor, with the shin at a right angle to the left leg (if your right knee doesn't rest comfortably on the floor, support it with a folded blanket). Fold forward over the extended leg.
- Supine Twist: lie on your back drawing knees into chest, knees together. Drop the bent legs to the left and rest them down. Right shoulder remains grounded, gaze towards your right hand. Hold and then reverse.

### **Affected Area: Calves**

At the first sign of cramp, immediately flex the foot, draw the toes back towards the knee and extend the heel, massaging the muscles vigorously.

Suggested exercises:

- Stand facing a wall with the right foot close to the wall and place the left foot about 1½ feet away from the front foot. Bend the right knee, keeping the left knee straight. Place forearms and elbows on wall. Keeping the left heel firmly down, move the right knee toward the wall; do not allow the right hip to fall forward. Relax the neck and shoulders throughout. Feel the stretch in the calf muscles and Achilles tendon. Hold for 30 seconds and then change legs. Repeat.

- Foot exercises: Sit comfortably on the floor, using some support for the lower back if necessary. Point and flex the toes of both feet, then rotate the ankles. Spread the toes and then curl the toes in.
- Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward facing dog): kneeling, place hands on the floor. Begin to straighten the legs which lifts your hips up. You are forming an inverted 'V' shape with your hips being the apex.
- Viparita Karani: lie on the floor facing the wall. Work your buttocks to touch the wall, extending your legs up the wall as straight as possible. Remain as still as possible for a few minutes allowing the blood to circulate.

### **Affected Area: Hands and Wrists**

Suggested exercises:

- Wrist rotations.
- Interlock fingers, reverse the palms outwards then extend the arms.
- Start in a kneeling position, palms on the floor, about 12 inches apart and parallel.
  - Spread fingers out wide and lean forward. Feel the stretch in the wrists and palms.
  - Then turn palms to face up, fingers pointing towards you. Lean back and hold.
- Clench both hands into a fist and then unclench, stretching the fingers. Shake the hands loosely from the wrists.

### **Affected Area: Thighs**

Suggested exercises:

- Virasana on support: kneel on the floor (on a folded blanket to pad your knees, shins, and feet if necessary), with your thighs perpendicular to the floor, and touch your inner knees together. Slide your feet apart, slightly wider than your hips, with the tops of the feet flat on the floor. If your buttocks don't comfortably rest on the floor (in between the legs), raise them on a block or thick book placed between the feet. Make sure both sitting bones are evenly supported.

These are only a tiny selection of the many beneficial stretches or exercises you can do. Should the cramping not be relieved or if it continues, please consult your doctor.