

Cramps in the Legs

Management Options

Brief Decision Aid

There are **three** options for the management of cramps in the legs:

- **Lifestyle and simple measures.**
- **Stretching exercises and posture.**
- **Quinine tablets.**

In making a decision you need to ask yourself - What is important to me? This leaflet and your health professional can tell you the evidence and give their suggestions but you need to make a decision that is right for you. What are your preferences??

You may want to think about:

- Am I likely to continue doing the stretching exercises after activity?
- Do I want to consider stopping other medications if this might help?
- What do I think about taking tablets?
- How concerned am I about side effects?

Benefits and risks of lifestyle and simple measures

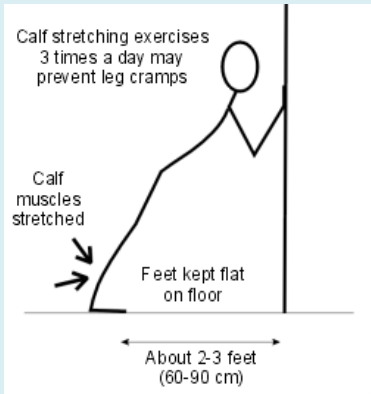
Treatment Option	Benefits	Risks or Consequences
Lifestyle and simple measures Avoiding certain medications (do not stop without discussion with your doctor): Diuretics (water tablets), nifedipine, cimetidine, salbutamol, statins, terbutaline, lithium, clofibrate, penicillamine, phenothiazines, and nicotinic acid. Avoid Too much alcohol, dehydration, or over exertion.	If the problem is mild, these may help on their own. These are things you can do for yourself. Cramps quite often disappear of their own accord.	Some medications that cause cramps may be too important to be stopped. Stopping exercise is usually not good for your general health. If the problem is more severe, these measures may not be enough. Sometimes cramps can be very persistent.

Benefits and risks of Quinine tables

Treatment Option	Benefits	Risks or Consequences
Quinine tables Usually one tablet each bed time.	Studies show that Quinine can reduce the frequency of cramps - on average by one episode a week. Some people will find it is more effective than this. If your cramps are better within four weeks then you know it is going to work. If not, then no need to continue.	Some will find Quinine is less effective than this. It often will not stop cramps altogether. The national organisation for medicine safety (MHRA) have asked doctors to only prescribe this medicine if the cramps are <u>frequently very painful, not responding to exercises and causing regular disturbance of sleep.</u> in view of the following side effects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪30 people in 1000 will get some nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea or stomach pain due to quinine ▪Less than 4 in 1000 people will develop

	<p>Many side effects will be obvious within the first four weeks and if these happen you can decide whether to put up with the side effects or stop the Quinine.</p>	<p>tinnitus (ringing in the ears), hearing loss, vertigo(sensation of the room spinning), headache, and visual disturbances (a syndrome called cinchonism)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It can cause a very rare blood disorder <p>It is suggested you stop your treatment at three monthly intervals to see if your cramps have gone away.</p> <p>You cannot take if pregnant, or if past history of haemolytic anaemia, or optic neuritis.</p>
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Benefits and risks of stretching exercises and posture

Treatment Option	Benefits	Risks or Consequences
<p>Stretches This involves stretching the muscles that most usually cramp - particularly after exercise.</p> <p>Stretches need to be done for five minutes and try to involve all the muscles that usually cramp. Here is an example of how to stretch a muscle</p>  <p>Leg position in bed may also help - see www.patient.co.uk for more information</p>	<p>Easy for most people to do with no special equipment needed.</p> <p>May reduce symptoms to acceptable levels, although no formal trials have been done.</p> <p>No side effects.</p>	<p>Need to continue regularly for four weeks before you can assess how well this works.</p> <p>You need to start by doing the exercises three times a day for five minutes at a time with the last exercises being before bed.</p> <p>You need to be prepared to undertake the exercises regularly.</p>

Brief Decision Aids are designed to help you answer three questions: **Do I have options? What are the benefits and risks of these options, (and how likely are they)? How can we make a decision together that is right for me?**