

# Muscle Cramps

**Lack of water.** The most common causes of cramps usually are from dehydration. To prevent this, the goal is to drink before you get thirsty. Consuming enough fluids before, during and after exercise are the keys to staying well hydrated. The best way to tell if you are well hydrated is by the color of your urine. It should be clear to pale yellow. For every pound lost during exercise drink 16-20 ounces of fluid.

**Lack of Calcium.** Some research suggests that calcium plays an important role in muscle contraction. Athletes that eliminate calcium may develop muscle cramps more easily. To rule out any possible link between lack of calcium in the diet and muscle cramps it is recommend that athletes should consume a minimum of 2 servings per day.

**Lack of Potassium.** Electrolyte imbalance, such as lack of potassium, may play a role in muscle cramps. By eating the following foods you can be sure that you are getting your daily intake of potassium: whole wheat, oatmeal, salads, raw or steamed veggies (^ in K loss through boiling), potatoes, bananas, and melons.

**Lack of Sodium.** Athletes may be at risk for sodium imbalance due to the significant amount of sodium loss through sweat. This can contribute to cramps as well. If you complain about cramps, chronic fatigue and lethargy, try introducing a little salt into your diet.

- The above recommendations are not proven solutions, but you may want to experiment with these dietary improvements if you suffer from muscle cramps on a daily basis.

Reference: Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.

For more information contact: Jessica Pellicciotta, MA,RD, LDN  
610.519.5963