

Heat Cramps

Heat cramps are painful, involuntary spasms that usually occur when being physically active in hot environments

Fact

- Children are at an increased risk of heat related illnesses including dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and heat cramps
- Children absorb more heat from the environment because they have a greater skin surface area to body mass (weight) ratio than adults. Therefore, the smaller the child, the faster that heat is absorbed
- Heat cramps are painful, involuntary spasms that usually occur when being physically active in hot environments

Spotting the signs and symptoms of heat cramps

Symptoms of heat cramps include:

- Dehydration
- The spasms may feel more intense and last for a longer duration than typical nighttime leg cramps
- Heat cramps may involve any muscle group involved in physical activity but typically affect the calves, arms, abdomen, and back

Avoiding and preventing heat cramps

- Avoid becoming dehydrated while participating in physical activity
- Outside activity should be reduced as the air temperature and humidity levels rise
- If experiencing any of the signs or symptoms listed above, stop activity, get out of the sun/heat, rest in a cool place, and drink fluids to replenish the water lost through perspiring
- Take frequent breaks to cool down and rest
- Avoid drinks that contain caffeine and sugar because they do not replenish the body's fluid levels properly
- If possible, wear light-colored, loose-fitting, absorbable clothing during physical activity
- Drink water or an electrolyte-containing sports drink
- Gently stretch and/or massage the affected muscle group
- Call your doctor if your cramps do not go away in one hour