

HEALTH HIGHLIGHT

MUSCLE AND CALF CRAMPS: SIGNS OF MAGNESIUM DEFICIENCY

Muscle and calf cramps are typical symptoms of magnesium deficiency. They are not only annoying, but they can also be very painful. Calf cramps often disturb our sleep at night or occur early morning; however, muscle cramps, spasms or eye twitches can happen at any time of the day.

What happens during muscle cramps?

Magnesium helps the muscle to relax after contraction. In magnesium deficiency, muscle excitability increases, which leads to an uncontrolled tightening of the muscles and results in muscle and calf cramps, spasms and twitches. Besides the conventional nocturnal calf cramps, they can also occur in any muscle of the body, including the feet, toes or hands.

In cases of nocturnal calf cramps, taking magnesium in the evening before bed is recommended.

Where do you get magnesium from?

Magnesium is in a wide range of foods, with good sources including green leafy vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds and whole grains, but when showing signs of magnesium deficiency, supplementation may be required.

Foods naturally contain magnesium in an organic form, such as magnesium citrate. Magnesium citrate occurs as a building block in the body and is therefore well tolerated, fast-acting and available as a supplement to the diet.



How to prevent muscle and calf cramps?

Magnesium deficiency symptoms can be successfully alleviated by taking high dose magnesium regularly. It is important that magnesium is taken over a longer time period (at least 4–6 weeks) and at a sufficiently high dosage. The World Health Organisation (WHO) specifies a daily dose of at least 300mg magnesium to treat magnesium deficiency. If kidney function is healthy, there is no need to worry about an overdose, because any excessive magnesium is simply excreted through the urine.

What is the preferred form of magnesium to take?

Not all magnesium supplements are the same. The ideal supplement is magnesium citrate, which is found naturally in the body and so is well tolerated and fast-acting. Water-soluble magnesium citrate taken as a drink helps to increase the absorption of magnesium across the intestinal wall and into the cells, where magnesium is needed the most.

Studies show magnesium citrate supplementation can reduce calf-related muscle cramps by up to 50%.

