

## Muscle Cramps and Dialysis

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### What are muscle cramps?

Your muscles need to contract and relax to help you move around and rest.

Muscle cramps are caused by muscles contracting or tightening on their own. This means you cannot control this. Cramps often only last a few seconds but can be very painful. Muscle cramps can also cause problems sleeping.

Muscle cramps during hemodialysis can be so severe that the dialysis treatment may need to be stopped.

### What causes muscle cramps?

The cause is not known. When you are getting hemodialysis treatments, cramps are more common. Research is looking at many reasons for the cause. Some of the reasons are:

- low blood volume – this happens when we have to take a large amount of fluid off during your dialysis treatment. The most common cause of this is drinking a lot of fluid between dialysis treatments. It can also happen if, for any reason, you did not get all of your excess fluid off at the previous dialysis session.
- a problem with salts in the blood

### What muscles are affected?

The leg muscles are most often affected. Less common muscles that may cramp include the hands, arms and abdomen.

turn over➔

## **What is the treatment?**

Treatment aims to:

- lower the number of times you have cramps
- relieve the symptoms
- see if any medication helps you

You and members of your health care team will work together to find the best combination of treatments for you.

## **Limit fluid intake**

- Limit your fluid intake between treatments. Ask your primary care nurse if he or she thinks that drinking less fluid would help you.

## **Leg Stretching**

- Lie face up on a bed or couch with your legs out straight.
- Gently bend knees up toward your chest leaving your feet flat on the surface of the bed or couch.
- When your feet are as close to your buttocks as you can get them with comfort, hold for 10 seconds.
- Straighten your legs and relax for 5 seconds.
- Repeat stretch again.
- Repeat 3 times during day.
- Do these before bed to help prevent night cramps.

## **Remember . . .**

It may take some time to find the best treatment for you. Members of your health care team will work together with you to help you manage this problem.