

## Electrolytes – Cramping your style!

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There are three main causes of muscle cramps: lack of magnesium, dehydration or electrolyte (calcium, chloride, sodium & potassium) imbalances. Improper calcium to magnesium ratios do not allow an active muscle to relax. Dehydration causes a decrease in blood volume, resulting in inadequate blood flow to the muscle. Electrolyte imbalances decrease electrical activity in the muscle and therefore the muscle does not return to rest after an activity as it should.

Whether you are an athlete or not, the consequences of cramping can range from an irritating calf cramp in the night that disrupts your sleep to a pulled muscle in the middle of a competition that knocks you out of competition. To avoid cramping the key ingredient is prevention.

To prevent cramping you need to stay hydrated and ensure you consume an adequate amount of minerals on a daily basis. Avoiding dehydration means drinking, 6-8 glasses of water on average plus EXTRA during hot weather, sweating or endurance activities. As a general rule you should consume enough water after exercise to bring your body weight up to equal what it was when you started. Caffeine, alcohol, salty foods and a diet high in animal protein will increase your need for extra water as well to avoid dehydration.

Meeting your bodies minerals needs, means eating from a variety of sources of fruit vegetables and grains. An example source of each mineral are listed below:

Potassium	Avocados, lima beans, potatoes, tomatoes, bananas, fish, dried apricots, spinach and almonds;
Sodium	is generally found naturally in most foods;
Calcium	kelp, tofu, kale, turnip, and green leafy vegetables, soy milk, almonds, dandelion greens, brazil nuts, goat's milk, seeds, brewer's yeast, figs and of course dairy products;
Magnesium	whole grains, dark green vegetables, molasses, nuts, seafood and legumes.