

Questions & Answers about Physical Therapy



By:
Deb Lavender, P.T.

I have had a lot of people ask me various questions after reading the articles I have had in the Women's Journal, so I won't profess to be a Dr. Donahue, but I will commit this column to answer any questions you may have regarding topics relevant to Physical Therapy.

I seem to get a lot of mus-

cle cramps in my legs, why does it happen and what can I do about it?

Muscles cramps are pretty common and there are many reasons for the cramping. Here are just some of the common reasons. Injuries can create muscle cramps. Muscle cramping can cause a "splinting" of the area to prevent movement, which prevents further injury.

Vigorous activity, exercise, or a big project at home, such as spring cleaning or yard work can cause cramping to occur, usually several hours after the activity is complete. Sitting or lying for an extended time in one position, especially in an awkward position can cause cramps. Repetitive activities can cause cramping.

Both young and old people (especially the older of us), can experience cramps at night

which is very disruptive of our sleep patterns. It may be initiated by a movement that shortens the muscle, which then causes the cramp.

Dehydration, heat, sports, vigorous activities, and medication that promote fluid loss (like diuretics) can increase the likelihood of cramps.

Low sodium, calcium, magnesium and potassium can contribute to muscle cramps. Most of us get these nutrients in our normal diet. If you are exercising in hot weather you can deplete some of these nutrients. If you have any medical condition, or take any medications that you think are interfering with the level of these nutrients you should talk to you pharmacist or physician.

There are many things you can do to decrease the cramps you are having and to

prevent them from occurring. Keep hydrated, drinking water is still the best way to do that. There are all kinds of new products for electrolytes, and fluid replacement, there is no one product that has "the" magic formula.

Stretch the muscles that cramp. If a muscle is cramping, stretch it immediately. If your calf is cramping pull your toes up to you as soon as possible. There is a short time

that feels like it is the last thing you want to do, pull them up anyway, the sooner you do the faster the cramp dissipates. When the back of your thigh, the hamstring, cramps, straighten your knee. A lot of people know to stand up, which automatically stretches the back of your legs.

If you have further questions about muscle cramps call me or your physician.

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Deb Lavender is a physical therapist with over 25 years of experience providing hands-on manual therapy. She owns Des Peres Physical Therapy in Des Peres and accepts all insurances.

Colon Hydrotherapy: A Feeling of Clean



By:
Josephine Goffe-Gardner, RN, ND

We define constipation as irregular and/or infrequent bowel movements. It can make one feel very uncomfortable and even be quite painful. Constipation can be caused by poor eating habits, lack of exercise, not eating enough fiber or not consuming enough water.

Some signs of constipation are having one or no bowel

movements a day, incomplete elimination, being overweight, fatigue, irritability, mental confusion, gas, indigestion, lethargy, headaches, migraines, earaches, sinus drainage, allergies, cellulite, depression, unsatisfied hunger, poor circulation and rashes. It is a problem that affects almost everyone during their lifetime.

The primary causes of constipation are lack of fiber and exercise, and not consuming enough water. It is interesting to note that in women, the lack of privacy can also lead to constipation. Secondary causes of constipation are due to conditions such as Inflammatory Bowel Disease, diverticulosis, parasitic infestation, and inability to digest complex carbohydrates, especially grains, starchy roots, milk and sugar.

Ideally the colon should empty within an hour after each meal. Eating a meal triggers

peristalsis to occur. This is the muscular movement of the digestive system that moves our food through the digestive system. Exercise and gravity aids peristalsis in moving ingested material through the digestive system.

Colon Hydrotherapy can be helpful in restoring tone to the digestive muscular system. It creates successful bowel habits and loosens stubborn waste from the walls of the digestive system.

Colon hydrotherapy can be used monthly to cleanse and tone the muscles in the intestine or can also be used occasionally to correct temporary constipation. It is also utilized to relieve gas, make one comfortable before and after a trip, prior to a medical procedure, and before/after an athletic event.

During your colon hydrother-

apy procedure we also employ abdominal massage, breathing techniques and aromatherapy oil to aid in your elimination process.

Abdominal massaging encourages waste material sticking to the walls of the colon to break up, allowing it to move out of the colon. This procedure is especially good if the constipation is the result of Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Our colon hydrotherapy and

abdominal massage are performed using a regulated water temperature of 98 degrees Fahrenheit. This regiment appears to relax the spasms of the digestive system and restore normal peristalsis.

During colon hydrotherapy sessions slow abdominal breathing is essential for good elimination. As previously mentioned, water hydration, exercise and diet are essential to good intestinal health.

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