

from the family physician

# NIGHT CRAMPS

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A common affliction amongst many adults is to suffer excruciating cramping in the legs at night. The pain will wake them, but after some stretching exercise, they gain some relief. The problem is surely circulatory, as all cramps (*Angina cruris*) are. There is just not enough blood getting to the muscles.

An old solution is to take nightly one Quinine Tablet (*Quinine Bisulphate*) 300mg to 600mg. After ten days or so this can be stopped. If and when there is recurrence of cramping, another ten day course can be taken.

Sometimes the cramping is associated with a lack of potassium. It may be sufficient to drink those electrolyte supplements which athletes commonly swallow. These contain potassium as well as sodium salts. One can also prescribe a short course, say a week, of potassium chloride tablets, for example 500mg dissolved in water daily.

Because it is evidently largely circulatory, one must not smoke, since nicotine will contract the arteries, sometimes permanently. Hence Buerger's Disease (*thromboangiitis obliterans*) occurs very much in response to nicotine.

Other strange remedies have also been advocated. One is to place a common magnet at the bottom of the bed or to sleep on an underlay which has many small magnets in them; this is also said to relieve arthritic pains. Strangest of all is to fill a small bag with wine-bottle corks and place these at the end of the bed each night. SMA