



What Gives you CRAMP?

Cramp is a common injury for athletes at all levels and affects the hardworking muscles such as the calves.

So what is CRAMP?

It is when a muscle goes into spasm and refuses to relax. Pain in affected muscles range from a slight spasm to agonising pain, and can last for a few seconds to 15 minutes.

Why do we get CRAMP?

There are three major factors:

- **Fatigue:** Cramp sets in when muscles are tired
- **Hydration:** We get cramp when we have not drunk enough fluid.
- **Conditioning:** The less fit we are, the more likely we are to suffer.

It is common in most athletes and can set in during long bouts of exercise, particularly when a swimmer is dehydrating. Cramp often happens after you have sweated a lot. Sweat is high in sodium (salt) and loss of sodium upsets the way your muscle works.

The immediate treatment for muscle cramp is to stretch and gently massage the muscle, the use of an ice pack is sometimes necessary in the severe cases.

How can you avoid CRAMP?

Warming up properly, keeping a good level of fitness and drinking lots of fluid and a nutritious diet.

Keeping a drink on poolside can help reduce the risk of dehydration and cramp.