



Is it a muscle spasm or cramp?

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When we use the muscles that we can voluntarily control, the muscles contract and relax as we need them to move. The neck muscles are used to support our head along with the trunk and work together for our posture.

When a muscle or muscle fibers involuntarily contract, it becomes a spasm. When that spasm becomes forceful and sustained, it becomes a cramp.

Spasms can involve the whole muscle, part of the muscle, or adjacent muscles. This can be caused by multiple factors such as overuse, muscle fatigue, and/or dehydration. These factors cause the muscle to become hyperexcitable and then it spasms.

Muscle cramps are a prolonged spasm and can cause intense pain with the inability to use those muscles temporarily.

We see what happens with athletes when they become dehydrated and over use their muscles during activities. Another example is writer's cramp where the small muscles of the hand have prolonged use.

Proper nutrition and fluid intake can help reduce the possibility of spasms and cramps.

Health conditions can also be a factor in spasms and cramps. Some examples are diabetes, anemia, kidney disease, thyroid, and hormone issues. These factors can reduce fluid and mineral distribution to the muscles for proper muscle function.

Gentle stretching of the extremity muscles such as calf muscles and the hands and arms can help relieve the spasms or cramps. There are medications available to help relieve spasms and cramps. Please see your doctor if symptoms are persistent.