

# Dad, I want a Charley Horse too!

My 9-year-old daughter recently had a major change in her career plans, from wanting to be a mermaid to being a Physician. I am still trying to find similarities between the two professions to better understand what led to this “slight” change in career path for her. Some rightly said that children are like mirrors; they reflect all that they see and hear. Perhaps she sees the difference that our work has made in the lives of many including her teachers who came seeking care. I am certain that the stories of numerous patients have impacted her. For instance, hearing that several of my patients have “charley horses”, it was only natural for her to request one... “Dad, I would like one (charley horse) too!”

Although charley horse is a commonly used term for cramps in the leg, typically in the calf muscles, I was curious to learn about the origin of the term. There is a debate about the origin of the nickname. According to one source, there was a lame horse named Charley whose work was to help move things around a baseball park. The picture of the limping horse was so deeply entrenched in memories of the ballplayers that they started referring to each other as “charley horse” if they pulled a leg muscle or developed any minor impairment in their legs. Since the 1880s, the slang word lingered and is now commonly used to describe a sudden tightening or contracting sensation that lasts a few seconds to several hours and can be painful as well as debilitating.

The dreaded charley horse is reported to affect up to 60 percent of adults who have reported the presence of nocturnal leg cramps in the form of a painful spasm, tightening of calf muscles and twinges. Numerous causes of charley horses have been described in medical literature including muscle fatigue, dehydration, mineral deficiency and poor circulation (venous insufficiency).

During the initial stages, it is a good idea to gently massage the affected areas and use over-the-counter pain medication such as ibuprofen.

There are some easy ways to help prevent charley horses including staying hydrated, eating a balanced diet, avoiding excessive sugars and caffeine, and avoiding overexertion.

There are numerous old wives’ tales about home remedies from drinking pickle juice, using quinine, to the use of a bar of soap under the bedsheet to fend off charley horses.

TO KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW AND WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW, THAT IS TRUE KNOWLEDGE. CONFUCIUS

There is scarce scientific data to back these claims. One Harvard study described an ion channel called TRPV1 that activates the spinal column and inhibits the firing of nerves to dull the pain of cramps. It is possible that the protons in pickle juice use this mechanism to help alleviate the discomfort. Remember that a mere 2 ounce shot of the juice may contain a few hundred milligrams of sodium, so anyone with heart disease, hypertension or renal insufficiency should exercise caution. Quinine has potential side effects such as severe bleeding and heart arrhythmias. There does not seem to be any harm from using a bar of nice smelling soap if you have a strong urge to try it under your bedsheet. If nothing else, it will help your bed smell nice!

Having a magnesium, potassium, or calcium deficiency can contribute to leg cramps, however, your medical history must be taken into account before you consider using any over-the-counter supplements. It is always better to discuss with your Primary Care Provider to avoid any adverse interactions.



Although infrequent incidences of muscle spasms may not be anything to worry about, they are signs that the spasms might be more than a run-of-the-mill charley horse. Studies have shown that leg cramps at night are a very common manifestation of venous disease in legs. Our veins are responsible for collecting de-oxygenated

(Continued inside)



Happy New Year



## Winter Newsletter 2018

- Patient Testimonial: Sandra Dyer – No More Leg Cramps & Restless Legs
- Laughter is the Best Medicine! (joke inside)
- Dad, I want a Charley Horse too!
- Charley Horse: What is it - Who gets them - What to do



## Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for a Happy New Year

As we get ready to bid farewell to the year 2018, I feel blessed to start the new year with my wonderful family, an outstanding team at Alsara Clinic, and the friendships of my patients who entrusted me and my team with their care.

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to care for someone in their most vulnerable times, often battling with both pain and embarrassment. While at your bedside, striving to help you heal and regain your confidence, I witnessed virtues in you, including hard work, mutual respect, love and appreciation for the simple joys that form the basis of a happy and fulfilling life. I feel fortunate to be part of this beautiful community and the big small town of St. Joe that my family and I love to

call “home”. I may have helped change lives, but along the way, you have changed mine!

Here’s wishing you a Happy Holiday Season and a healthy New Year full of joy, love and new memories. Always remember that life is a beautiful journey.

Sam Gupta, M.D., MPH

Sam Gupta



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# Patient Testimonial • Sandra Dyer

## No More Leg Cramps & Restless Legs

“I just got married last year on July 29th. It’s been just over a year in July, and I’m happily married. And if it wasn’t for my husband checking this place out [Alsara Vein Clinic], I wouldn’t have been where I’m at right now.

We discovered [Alsara Vein Clinic] from just ourselves. We searched it on the internet, and figured it would be a great place to get healed.

I had leg cramps. I had I leg cramps so bad that I couldn’t... it was hard to walk, and it’s hard to enable myself to do walking and enjoy myself. I was basically just laying on the couch just complaining of the ache and the pains and the... I just wasn’t comfortable doing anything. It has been over 10 years or so that I have experienced that. And it wasn’t a very comfortable feeling [having to say] to my friends [who were] saying: ‘Well, you wanna go do this today?’, and I’d say: ‘Well, I can’t because my legs are not up to par’. Waking up with leg cramps in the middle of the night, ‘cause there’s nothing that no one could do. And it hurt so bad that, even if you did move and start walking it, I had to get up and walk around to get the leg cramps gone.

The staff and the physician are very friendly and knowledgeable of what they’re doing. Now that I’ve had treatments, I am able to walk a lot better. I’m not waking up with the leg cramps in the middle of the night, which is a relief. I’m not kicking in the middle of the night and at my spouse!

Well, the pain was so great that I would start crying because I wouldn’t have no relief of no sort until I started to come here. I tried medication for Restless Leg Syndrome and that wasn’t working. And, finally, I came here and sought relief, and I found it. My legs are a lot healthier. I’ve got a lot more strength. I’ve gained the freedom of not having... not to walk so far and not have no pain in my legs.

Be sure to come [to Alsara Vein Clinic] because it does really help. It gives you relief to know that when you are hurtin’ as bad as I was, that the treatments they give are working.

Oh, I’m happy to be here because if it wasn’t for them, I would not be where I’m at right now. I’m just so happy to know that I’ve got legs now. Before, I didn’t have any.

“I’m just so happy to know that I’ve got my legs now. Before, I didn’t have any.”

–Sandra Dyer





# Charley Horse



## WHAT IS IT?

A “charley horse” is another term for a muscle spasm or cramp in the leg. While cramps can happen in any muscle, charley horse is most commonly noted in calf muscles and feet.

## WHO GETS THEM?

Anyone can develop a charley horse, however, according to the **National Institute on Aging**, not drinking enough water, poor muscle conditioning, and certain medications are factors that make people more susceptible to getting a charley horse as they age.

## WHAT TO DO?

There are a few ways you can ease the pain from your charley horse. Drinking electrolytes and stretching can help to keep your muscles loose, as well as trying to take breaks from sitting for long periods of time. Applying an ice pack for 10-15 minutes following strenuous exercise can also calm down muscle tension.

If you are experiencing muscle cramps regularly, it may be sign of blood flow in your legs due to veins that have failed. Call us for a free consultation. Your Vein Specialist will ask you some questions and likely check the blood flow using ultrasound.

Remember that vein problems in the legs affect more

than half of adults. In addition to leg cramps, you may notice heaviness in your legs, tiredness, itching, burning, restlessness or leg swelling. The affected veins are typically deep inside the legs, hence you may not see them on the skin surface. Left untreated, blood flow in the legs continues to worsen. Varicose veins and venous insufficiency may lead to blood clots, discoloration of the skin, sores that do not heal well, bleeding veins and frequent skin infections.

Modern treatments are minimally invasive with minimal to no pain, no downtime, and almost all insurance companies offer coverage for symptomatic venous problems.

(Continued from outside)

blood from the tissues and returning it to the heart and lungs, where the blood is replenished with oxygen and nutrients. Veins in legs tend to fail more easily due to risk factors such as genetic predisposition, prolonged sitting or standing, pregnancies, and age. When some veins fail, the blood cannot flow through them effectively and starts pooling in the legs. In face of compromised blood flow, calf muscles are not able to function appropriately and cause cramps (charley horses) and restlessness (Restless Leg Syndrome).

I cannot emphasize enough the seriousness of repetitive muscle cramps. One of our patients, Sandra Dyer, has graciously shared her story (see outside flap). She and her husband came to us looking for answers after three visits to the hospital for severe leg cramps.

Like most chronic conditions, left untreated, the diseased (varicose) veins continue to worsen and may cause other complications such as swelling, skin discoloration, blood clots, poorly healing sores, infection or bleeding.

**FREE Consultations**  
**No Referral Necessary**  
**Walk-ins Welcome!**



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# The Venous Anatomy of the Legs

## Varicose Veins and Chronic Venous Insufficiency

3

Poor blood flow in legs causes muscles to cramp.

You may notice “charley horse” and restlessness (Restless Leg Syndrome).

2

Initially, the symptoms may be limited to:

**heaviness, tiredness, itching, burning, cramps and restlessness in legs.**

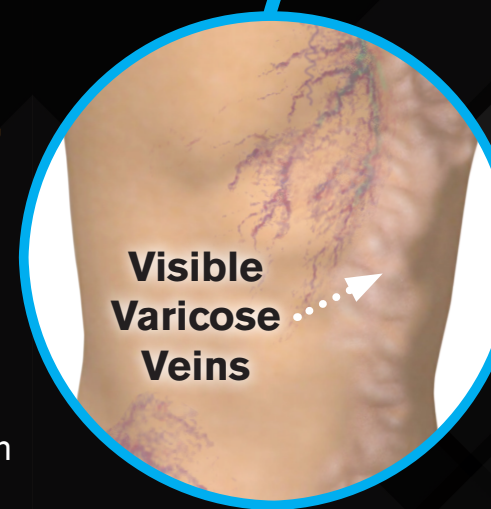
Varicose veins may be present deeper hence may not be visible from the outside.

1

Spider veins are a smaller version of varicose veins.



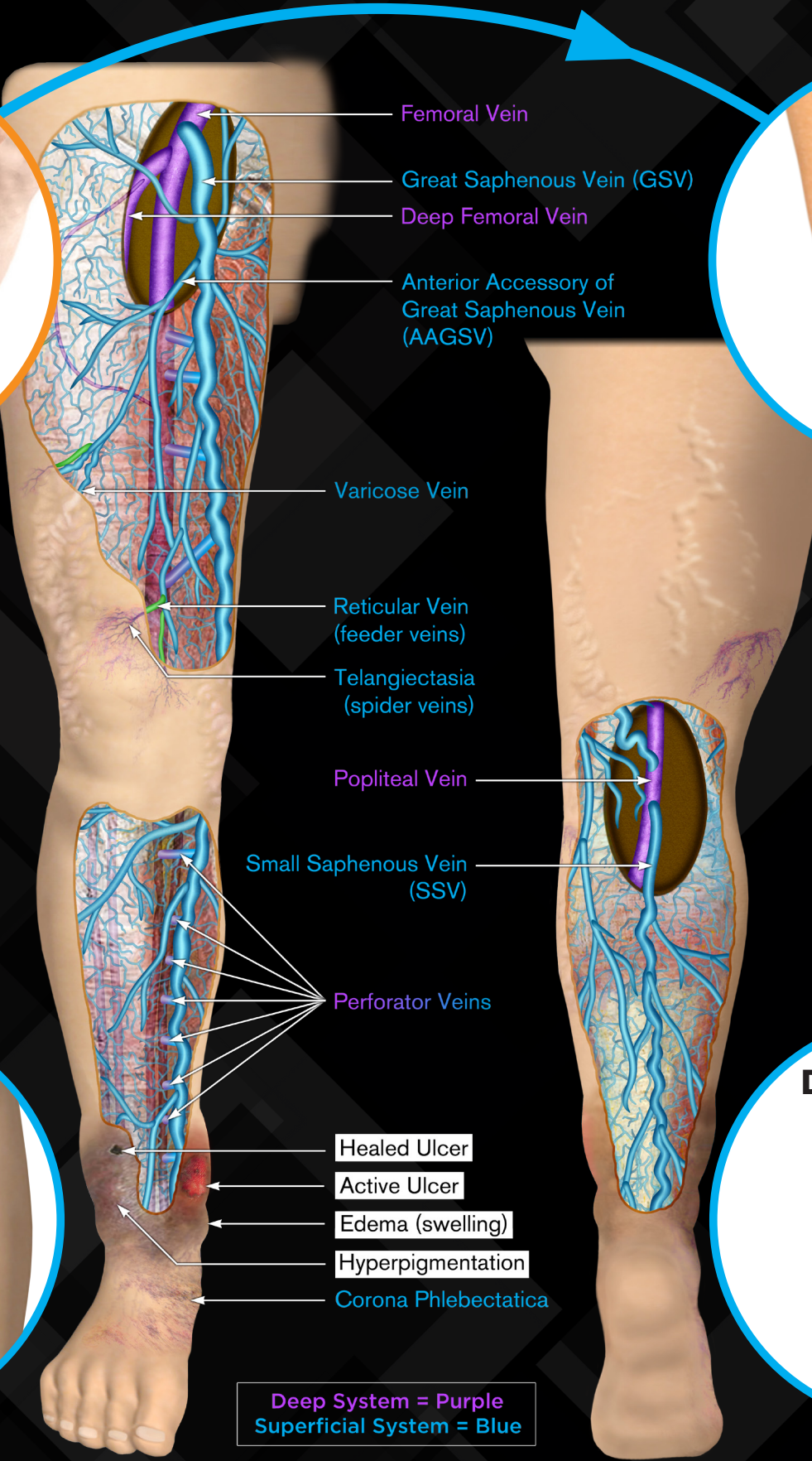
Cramps and Restlessness



Visible Varicose Veins



Spider Veins



Femoral Vein

Great Saphenous Vein (GSV)

Deep Femoral Vein

Anterior Accessory of Great Saphenous Vein (AAGSV)

Varicose Vein

Reticular Vein (feeder veins)

Telangiectasia (spider veins)

Popliteal Vein

Small Saphenous Vein (SSV)

Perforator Veins

Healed Ulcer

Active Ulcer

Edema (swelling)

Hyperpigmentation

Corona Phlebectatica

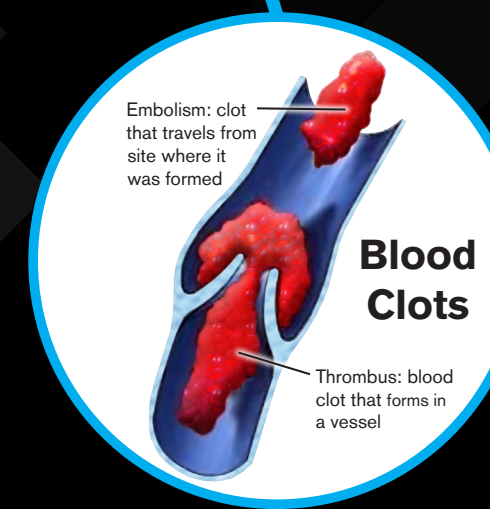
Deep System = Purple  
Superficial System = Blue

4

Backflow and pooling of blood in legs may cause “oozing” of fluid through the vein walls and result in swelling (edema).



Swelling



Blood Clots

5

Varicose veins are a risk factor for formation of blood clots in legs.



Discoloration and Ulcer

6

Left untreated, you may notice skin discoloration, poorly healing ulcers (sores), bleeding or infection (cellulitis) in legs.