Mia 9-year-old daughter recently had a major change in her career plans, from wanting to be a mermaid to becoming a nurse. I am still trying to find commonalities between the two professions to better understand what led to this ‘little’ change in career path for her. Some might say that children are like mirrors; they reflect all that we have been and hear when they are young. I am certain that the stories of numerous patients have impacted her. For instance, she has had a number of different stories of “charley horse” – it was only natural for her to request one. “Dad, I would like to try a charley horse too!”

Although charley horse is a commonly used term for cramps in the leg, typically in the calf muscles, it was curious to learn about the origin of the term. There is a delightful tale of 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 baseball fans that they started referring to each other as ‘charley horse’ if they pulled a muscle or developed any minor injuries in their legs. Since the 1890s, the slang word lingered and has become a part of the American vernacular. Although charley horse is a commonly used term for cramps in the leg, there are numerous old wives’ tales about home remedies from exercising to drinking pickle juice, using quinine, caffeine, and avoiding overexertion. 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.

Winter Newsletter 2018

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- 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

Although insufficient incidences of muscle spasms may not be anything to worry about, they are signs that the spams might be more than a run-of-the-mill charley horse. Studies have shown that leg cramps at night are not be anything to worry about, they are signs that the spams 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. 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, contracting sensation that lasts a few seconds to several hours and can be painful as well as debilitating. Since the 1880s, the slang word lingered and has become a part of the American vernacular.

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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.

WHAT IS IT?

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 leg 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 help of endovenous laser ablation. Using modern technology, we are now able to easily seal the diseased veins with help of endovenous laser ablation, allowing you to return to normal activities, without any downtime. Treatment of symptomatic venous disease is typically covered by most all insurance companies including Medicare and Medicaid.

If ‘charley horses’ are visiting you at night, call 816-396-0245 to get back in the saddle or visit MyVeinDoc.com.

(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.

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FREE Consultations
No Referral Necessary
Walk-ins Welcome!
816.396.0245
MyVeinDoc.com
4906 Frederick Ave
St. Joseph, MO 64506

How to diagnosis

1. Spider Veins are a smaller version of varicose veins.
2. Initially, the symptoms may be limited to: heaviness, tiredness, itching, burning, cramps and restlessness in legs.
3. Poor blood flow in legs causes muscles to cramp. You may notice “charley horse” and restlessness (Restless Leg Syndrome).
4. Backflow and pooling of blood in legs may cause “oozing” of fluid through the vein walls and result in swelling (edema).
5. Varicose veins are a risk factor for formation of blood clots in legs.
6. Left untreated, you may notice skin discoloration, poorly healing ulcers (sores), bleeding or infection (cellulitis) in legs.

Charley Horse

WHAT IS IT?

WHO GETS THEM?

Visible Varicose Veins

Crimps and Restlessness

Visible Varicose Veins

Spider Veins

The Venous Anatomy of the Legs

Varicose Veins and Chronic Venous Insufficiency

Calf Muscle Cramps (Charley Horse)

Poor blood flow in legs causes muscles to cramp.
You may notice “charley horse” and restlessness (Restless Leg Syndrome)

1. Spider Veins
2. Poor Blood Flow
3. Muscle Cramps
4. Backflow
5. Varicose Veins
6. Left untreated

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

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

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