

Class Starters & Enders

Making the Most of Instructional Time Five Minute Lessons

Class Starters and Enders help utilize the last minutes of class when a lesson ends but there is not enough time to start another, or for an interest approach at the beginning of class. Mini-lessons correlate to GPS in the programs areas below.

A Horse Named Charley

Program Areas: Healthcare

Instructions: Read the material and make notes of important points, answer questions, and be ready to discuss this topic.

What's a Charley Horse?

Imagine you're lying in bed, ready to go to sleep, thinking about the math homework you have to finish in the morning, when suddenly you are hit with an excruciating pain in your leg. These nighttime **cramps** are symptoms of a **charley horse**, or sudden **muscle spasms** of the calves, thighs, or feet.



Stretching is a good way to ease nighttime charley horses as well as sports-related dead leg.

This type of muscle cramp usually occurs just as people are falling asleep or waking up, and can last several minutes. It's a pretty common **ailment** – however, no doctor seems to know the exact cause.

Muscle spasms often arise when a muscle is overused or injured. Poor nutrition, such as low levels of water and minerals, and even irritated nerves can cause charley horses. Too much exercise, overused muscles, being **dehydrated**, taking certain medicines, having flat feet, and even having some diseases are also contributors. Some people can even get charley horses after a long time of standing on a hard surface, sitting, or having their legs in awkward positions. An imbalance in **electrolytes**, such as magnesium, potassium, calcium, and sodium can also lead to muscle cramps, as they play critical roles in the body's metabolism and control of muscle contraction.

There are several things you can do to stop a charley horse in the process – walking around, stretching muscles while sitting or standing, taking a hot shower or warm bath, and rubbing the affected area with an ice pack.

Despite having an unknown source, nighttime charley horses can be prevented during the day time by drinking plenty of water, limiting intake of caffeine and alcohol, eating healthy, riding a stationary bike, and stretching leg muscles before bedtime. In more serious cases, medication might have to be prescribed, as frequent charley horses can be symptoms of other problems.

Is "Dead Leg" the Same Thing?

In the sports world, however, the term "charley horse" is used to refer to **dead leg**. This type of muscle **contusion** can arise from a simple exercise routine or being struck in the leg. Dead leg can cause torn muscles, restricted motion, serious pain and in some cases, swelling or bruising.

Who's Charley, Anyway?

Like its causes, the origin of the cramp's name is debatable. One theory says it was named after an old, lame horse called Charley who pulled the roller for the Chicago White Sox baseball team during the 1880s. Another theory says Charley Radbourn, a major league baseball pitcher who suffered from cramps, was the source. The third theory comes from King Charles' 17th century English police, who were called Charleys, who supposedly had achy legs from all the walking they had to do.

Review

1. When do charley horses occur most frequently?
2. What are three possible causes of charley horses?
3. How can a charley horse be prevented during the day?
4. How is dead leg different from a charley horse?
5. What are the theories as to how charley horses got their name?

Science Connection

Research the causes and treatments of another sports-related injury and summarize your findings in a one-page report.

Language Connection

Define the following terms.

Ailment	Dead Leg
Charley horse	Dehydrated
Contusion	Electrolytes
Cramps	Muscle Spasm

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