

Family Chiropractic

*Courtesy of Harbourfront Family Chiropractic
by Dr. Warren Gage*



What are muscle spasms?

You reach for a towel on the top shelf of the linen closet and your back wrenches in pain as a muscle goes into spasm. The pain is excruciating and you can barely move. How could something as simple as reaching for a towel produce such pain?

The answer is – it didn't. Reaching for the towel overextended a muscle that was already strained. This made the muscle stiffen and go into spasm to protect it from any further harm. Muscles can become strained due to repetitive movements or habits, such as poor posture, heavy lifting, throwing snow off of the shovel or sitting in front of a computer.

Often, when muscles have been strained for some time, all it takes is one sudden movement (i.e., one stretch for a towel) for an already strained muscle to go into spasm. When this happens, all the muscle fibers contract at the same time. Muscle contraction cuts off blood supply, which creates even more muscle pain, which causes the muscle to contract even further. This is an all too common occurrence for some people who lie immobilized on the floor for hours because the muscle doesn't relax with movement.

It can take several weeks for a muscle spasm to subside. Rest, application of ice/heat and massage therapy can help to relieve pain. Since a lack of magnesium, calcium and water are thought to provoke muscle spasms, increasing your intake of all three may help as well.

Of course, chiropractic care can help to alleviate the cause of muscle spasm once it is present; it can also help to prevent the spasm from occurring in the first place! Proper nerve function is essential to proper muscle function, and chiropractic adjustments locate and correct areas of the spine where there is nerve dysfunction.