

Cramps & Shin Splints

By Marguerite Bell

To continue my series of articles on preventing injuries in Scottish country dancing. In these articles I stressed the importance of doing warming up and stretching exercises before we begin dancing.

I wrote of **RICE** (REST, ICE, COMPRESS and ELEVATE) if you are unfortunate enough to injure yourself. In this article I am writing of the painful conditions that may occur from dancing. These are: 1. Muscle Cramps and 2. Shin Splints

Muscle Cramps

Muscle cramps are very painful. The muscles involved go into spasm, usually the calf, the hamstring, quadriceps muscles and sometimes the muscles of the toes. Cramps can occur while dancing, or at night after an evening of dancing.

Other causes are:

- a) using muscles which have not been well stretched
 - b) dehydration
 - c) low levels of potassium in the body
- and some people seem predisposed to them.

To prevent them we should:

- a) warm up and stretch before dancing,
- b) drink fluids preferably water before, during and after dancing
- c) include potassium in our diet (bananas, potatoes, orange juice are good sources of this)
- d) stretch muscles before going to bed
- e) have a warm bath after dancing
- f) keep our legs warm in bed; do this by using hot packs
- g) some ladies wear leg warmers while dancing.

If you have cramps try to stretch the cramp out; however sometimes that is too difficult to do. On a personal note. I have had a bad cramp once and this was after dancing at the Spring Fling in Vancouver, where almost every dance was encored. I wrapped my leg in towels, which I rinsed in hot water and wrung out. This really worked well.

Some people drink tonic water and the quinine in this relieves leg cramps.

Shin Splints.

Shin splints are pains in the front of the lower leg and are caused by too much exercise, or in our case, too much dancing. They are relieved by icing at least 3 times a day for 15 to 20 minutes, pain killers and anti inflammatories, and by 1 or 2 weeks rest from dancing.

Marguerite