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## The effect of oral magnesium substitution on pregnancy-induced leg cramps.

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**OBJECTIVE:** Our purpose was to determine whether women with pregnancy-related leg cramps would benefit from oral magnesium supplementation.

**STUDY DESIGN:** Seventy-three women with pregnancy-related leg cramps were interviewed about their symptoms in a prospective, double-blind, randomized trial. Initial serum magnesium levels and diurnal magnesium excretion was determined in 50% of the patients. Oral magnesium or placebo was given for 3 weeks, after which new interviews and laboratory analyses were performed. **RESULTS:** Serum magnesium levels in these patients were at or below the lower reference limit, as is also often the case in healthy pregnant patients. Oral magnesium substitution decreased leg cramp distress ( $p < 0.05$  compared with the placebo group,  $p < 0.001$  compared with initial complaints), but did not significantly increase serum magnesium levels, excess magnesium being excreted as measured by an increase in urinary magnesium levels ( $p < 0.002$ ). **CONCLUSION:** Oral magnesium supplementation seems to be a valuable therapeutic tool in the treatment of pregnancy-related leg cramps.

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It has been suggested that a secondary deficiency of magnesium may be responsible for the leg cramps experienced by as many as 30% of pregnant women. Magnesium therapy has been shown to be of value in the treatment of other types of leg cramps in elderly patients and diabetics, and results of a preliminary open trial have suggested that it may help during pregnancy. This controlled study was designed to evaluate the effects of magnesium supplementation on pregnancy-related leg cramps.

Researchers from two hospitals in Sweden conducted a double-blind, randomized trial in which 73 women with pregnancy-related leg cramps were randomly assigned to

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receive oral magnesium (15 mmol) or placebo daily for three weeks. Serum magnesium levels were measured, and patients recorded the frequency and severity of their leg cramp symptoms before and after treatment. Magnesium supplementation significantly decreased the severity of leg cramps, but it did not have a significant impact on serum magnesium levels. Side effects were insignificant. The results of this trial indicate that oral magnesium supplementation may be a valuable treatment option in the management of pregnancy-induced leg cramps.