- Muscles



PREVENTION

HEALTH

WHAT'S UP WITH...

MUSCLE FLUTTERS

Experts explain why you sometimes get little twitches under your skin.

BY KAYLA BLANTON

GETTY IMAGES.

COMMERCIAL DISTRIBUTION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED • PRINTED FROM PRESSREADER • NOT FOR SALE • PERSONAL COPY

YOU'RE SITTING PERFECTLY still, yet you can see the skin on your leg, hand, eyelid, or rib cage pulsing, as if a bug is bouncing on a tiny trampoline underneath. Technically called fasciculations, the twitches are spontaneous, rapid contractions of a few muscle fibers—they're common and usually harmless, says Christopher Fry, Ph.D., an associate professor of athletic training and clinical nutrition at the University of Kentucky and codirector of the school's Center for Muscle Biology. Unlike muscle spasms or cramps, they aren't painful, but they can be incredibly annoying and just plain weird.

WHAT CAUSES THE TWITCH?

These strange little flutters happen when the messaging system responsible for moving a particular group of muscle fibers fires randomly. (The tips of these neurons can be particularly sensitive, Fry explains.) If these twitches happen over a period of months with no underlying medical condition, it's called benign fasciculation syndrome, says Ryan Jacobson, M.D., an associate professor of neurology at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. You can't always pinpoint why your muscles start twitching, but common causes include:

- **Stress or anxiety**
- **Lack of sleep**
- **Excess caffeine or alcohol**
- **Overexercising**
- **Low potassium levels**
- **Dehydration**
- **Recent infections**

Calm the flutter

While massaging or stretching the area can help relieve bigger muscle spasms, there's not much you can do in the moment to relieve tiny twitches. Instead, treatment is usually about identifying and reducing triggers. **Try:**

- **HYDRATING MORE**
- **SLEEPING MORE**
- **LIMITING CAFFEINE**

For severe but benign muscle twitches, a doctor may prescribe nerve-modulating medications such as gabapentin.

WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

In some cases, muscle twitching could be related to an underlying metabolic or electrolyte problem, nerve damage, or even amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). If your twitches are accompanied by muscle atrophy, weakness, numbness, or tingling, check in with your health care provider, says Dr. Jacobson.

https://www.pressreader.com/usa/prevention-usa/20250301/page/40 2/2