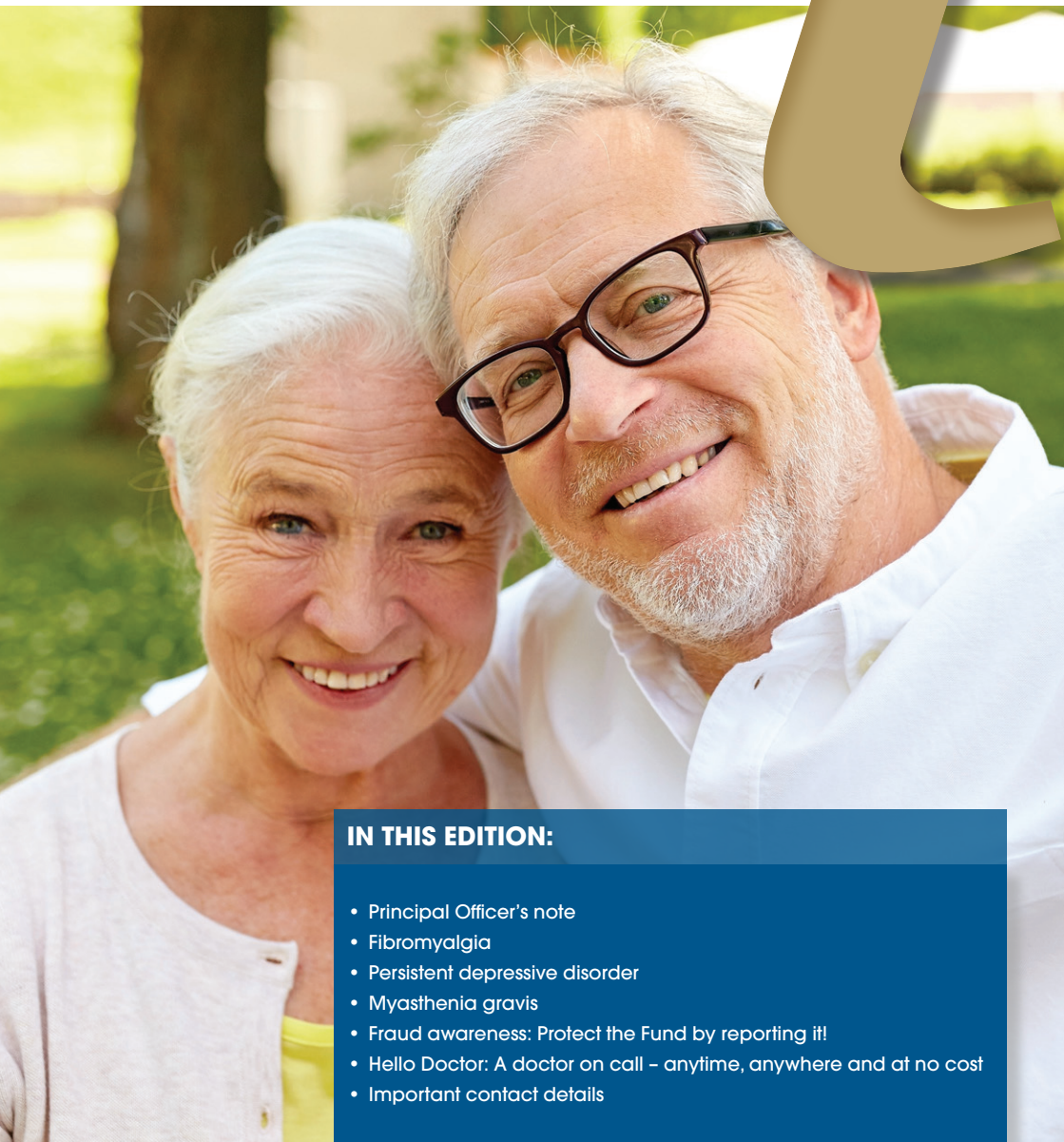




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# TransCare

FIRST EDITION OF 2025



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# Principal Officer's note



## Welcome to the first edition of **TransCare** for 2025.

Welcome back! We hope that you have had a wonderful break and enjoyed special time with friends and family. Time away from our everyday tasks can be remarkably good for body and spirit and the start of a new year provides an ideal time to reflect on where we have been and where we are heading. We would like to wish you a prosperous year ahead!

In this edition we cover fibromyalgia, a chronic (long-lasting) disorder that causes pain and tenderness throughout the body, and muscular dystrophy, a condition that causes muscle weakness.

If you or someone you know suffers from mild or moderate depression, please read the article on persistent depressive disorder (PDD). We encourage members to consider one or more of the following practical means to assist when feeling down or sad: do relaxation exercises, reduce your workload, eat well-balanced meals, keep yourself occupied, avoid drinking alcohol and, if you smoke, consider stopping.

We would like to remind you that if you are unable to contact us directly and need someone else to speak to us on your behalf, we will need you to complete a **member consent form** before we can accept instructions from, or share your information with, anyone else. This measure is in place to protect you against people who may try to access your information without authorisation. You can find the form on the Fund's website at [www.transmed.co.za](http://www.transmed.co.za). Alternatively, contact the customer service department on **0800 110 268** to obtain the form. Complete it electronically or print it out.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter.

We welcome any suggestions that you may have on articles or member benefits you would like to see published in future newsletters. Please send your suggestions to [suggestions@transmed.co.za](mailto:suggestions@transmed.co.za).

Happy reading.

Yours in good health

**Petrus Wassermann**

*Principal Officer*

# Fibromyalgia

## What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a chronic (long-lasting) disorder that causes pain and tenderness throughout the body, as well as fatigue and trouble sleeping. Scientists do not fully understand what causes it, but people with the disorder have an increased sensitivity to pain.

There is no cure for fibromyalgia, but healthcare providers can help manage and treat the symptoms. Treatment typically involves a combination of exercise or other movement therapy, psychological and behavioural therapy and medication.

## Who can get fibromyalgia?

Anyone can get fibromyalgia, but more women get it than men. It can affect people of any age, including children, but it usually starts in middle age and the chance of getting it increases as you get older. It occurs in people of all communities and backgrounds.

If you have other diseases, especially rheumatic diseases such as arthritis, mood disorders or conditions that cause pain, you may be more likely to get fibromyalgia. These diseases include:

- rheumatoid arthritis
- systemic lupus erythematosus (an immune system disease, commonly called lupus)
- ankylosing spondylitis (a type of arthritis affecting the spine)
- osteoarthritis
- depression or anxiety
- chronic back pain
- irritable bowel syndrome.

Fibromyalgia tends to run in families and some scientists believe that certain genes could make you more likely to develop it. However, the disorder also occurs in people with no family history of the disorder.

## Symptoms of fibromyalgia

The main symptoms of fibromyalgia are:

- chronic, widespread pain throughout the body or in multiple areas; pain is often felt in the arms, legs, head, chest, abdomen, back and buttocks. People often describe it as an aching, burning or throbbing sensation
- fatigue or an overwhelming feeling of exhaustion
- trouble sleeping.

Other symptoms may include:

- muscle and joint stiffness
- tenderness to touch
- numbness or tingling in the arms and legs

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- problems concentrating, thinking clearly and memory (sometimes called 'fibro fog')
- increased sensitivity to light, noise, odours and temperature
- digestive issues, such as bloating or constipation.

## **Causes of fibromyalgia**

The cause of fibromyalgia is not known, but studies show that people with the disorder have an increased sensitivity to pain and they feel pain when others do not. Brain imaging studies and other research have uncovered evidence of altered signalling in neural pathways that transmit and receive pain in people with fibromyalgia. These changes may also contribute to the fatigue, sleep troubles and 'fibro fog' issues that many people with the disorder experience.

Researchers believe that environmental (non-genetic) factors also play a role in a person's risk of developing the disorder. These environmental triggers may include having a disease that causes pain, such as rheumatoid arthritis, or mental health problems, such as anxiety or depression.

## **Combating fatigue**

Persistent fatigue is one of the most troubling symptoms of fibromyalgia. The following strategies may lead to improved sleep and help you feel more rested:

- Create a relaxing sleep environment and establish a sleep routine.
- Go to sleep and get up at the same time every day.
- Reserve your bed for sleeping. Watching TV, reading or using a laptop or phone in bed can keep you awake.
- Keep your bedroom comfortable. Try to keep your bedroom dark, quiet and cool.
- Avoid stimulants like caffeine and nicotine and limit alcohol intake.
- Wind down before bed. Avoid working or exercising close to bedtime. Try some relaxing activities that get you ready for sleep, such as listening to soft music, meditating or taking a warm bath.
- Pace yourself during the day. You may not be able to do all the things you once did or not in the same amount of time. Try not to use up all your energy each day, because doing too much can make your symptoms worse.

### **Source:**

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases



# Persistent depressive disorder

## What is persistent depressive disorder (PDD)?

PDD, formerly known as dysthymia or dysthymic disorder, is mild or moderate depression. If you have PDD, you may experience persistent low mood and other symptoms on most days.

## What are the symptoms of PDD?

The main symptom of PDD is a sad, low or dark mood. Other symptoms of PDD may include:

- fatigue
- feelings of hopelessness and/or worthlessness
- lack of appetite or overeating
- lack of concentration
- limited energy
- low self-esteem
- difficulty performing at work or school
- trouble sleeping or sleeping too much.

## What causes PDD?

Scientists don't fully understand what causes PDD. Most likely, depression is caused by abnormal connections between different parts of your brain,

preventing your brain cells from communicating with each other as they should.

## What are the risk factors for PDD?

PDD affects women more often than men. People with a family member with PDD may also be more likely to develop the condition.

## Can PDD be prevented?

Although you can't prevent depression, you can take steps to help reduce your risk of developing it. These things may also help improve your symptoms if you've already been diagnosed:

- Get physical activity several times a week.
- Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs.
- Meditate.

## Source:

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9292-persistent-depressive-disorder-pdd>



# Myasthenia gravis

## What is myasthenia gravis?

Myasthenia gravis is an autoimmune condition that causes skeletal muscle weakness. Myasthenia gravis affects how your nerves communicate with your muscles. It leads to muscle weakness that worsens throughout the day and with activity. Drooping eyelids and/or double vision are often the first sign. You may find it difficult to stand, lift objects and speak or swallow.

Myasthenia gravis usually targets the muscles in your eyes, face, neck, arms and legs. It can affect your ability to:

- move your eyes or blink
- keep your eyes open
- make facial expressions
- chew, swallow and talk
- raise your arms up and lift objects
- walk up stairs or get up from a chair.

## What are the types of myasthenia gravis?

The types of myasthenia gravis include:

- **Autoimmune myasthenia:** This is an autoimmune condition where the cause isn't well understood, but the likely cause is the production of certain types of antibodies (immune system proteins). This is the most common type.
- **Neonatal myasthenia:** This occurs when a foetus gets certain antibodies from a mother who has myasthenia gravis. An infant may have a weak cry or sucking reflex at birth. These temporary symptoms usually go away after three months.
- **Congenital myasthenia:** This isn't an autoimmune condition and a genetic change causes this type.

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There are two subtypes of autoimmune myasthenia:

- **Ocular:** The muscles that move your eyes and eyelids weaken. Your eyelids may droop or you may not be able to keep your eyes open. Some people have double vision. Eye weakness is often the first sign of myasthenia. Ocular myasthenia gravis may evolve into the generalised form for nearly half of all people diagnosed with this type.
- **Generalised:** Muscle weakness affects your eye muscles and other muscles in your face, neck, arms, legs and throat. You may find it difficult to speak or swallow, lift your arms over your head, stand up from a seated position, walk long distances and climb stairs.

### What are the symptoms of myasthenia gravis?

Symptoms of myasthenia gravis may include:

- muscle weakness in your arms, hands, fingers, legs and neck
- fatigue
- droopy eyelids (ptosis)
- blurry or double vision
- limited facial expressions
- difficulty speaking, swallowing or chewing
- trouble walking.

Initial symptoms of myasthenia gravis occur suddenly. Your muscles usually get weaker when you're active. Muscle strength returns when you rest. The intensity of muscle weakness often changes from day to day. Most people feel strongest at the start of the day and weakest at the end of the day.

In rare instances, myasthenia gravis affects muscles in your respiratory system. You may have shortness of breath or more serious breathing problems.

### What causes myasthenia gravis?

Myasthenia gravis (autoimmune type) occurs when your body's immune system mistakenly attacks itself. Researchers aren't sure why this happens. Studies suggest that certain immune system cells in your thymus gland have trouble distinguishing between threats to your body (like bacteria or viruses) and healthy components.

A genetic change may also cause congenital myasthenia. Antibodies passed from a mother to a foetus during pregnancy cause neonatal myasthenia.

### What are the risk factors for myasthenia gravis?

Myasthenia gravis is most common among women around the age of 40 and after the age of 60. However, the condition can affect anyone at any age.

You may be more at risk of developing myasthenia gravis if you:

- have a history of other autoimmune conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus
- have thyroid disease.

#### Source:

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/17252-myasthenia-gravis-mg>

# Fraud awareness: Protect the Fund by reporting it!

The Fund encourages members to report fraud by contacting the fraud hotline on **0800 000 436**.

Fraudulent activities include the following:

- service providers claiming for services they have not rendered
- service providers submitting claims to the Fund in cases where the member has already settled the account
- members and service providers submitting fictitious claims and splitting the cash
- service providers changing the dates of services to obtain benefits during a new benefit year
- non-registered persons using a registered member's membership card to obtain services
- misrepresentation of medical information, e.g. changing the details of a medical motivation to obtain approval for a procedure that would otherwise not be approved
- submission of fraudulent claims on behalf of a non-registered person and the subsequent manipulation of information on the claim.

# Hello Doctor: A doctor on call – anytime, anywhere and at no cost

Transmed gives you access to healthcare advice from medical professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week with the Hello Doctor app. The app is available in all official South African languages.

Hello Doctor includes the following:

- **Talk to a doctor:** Request a call and one of the doctors will call you back within an hour.
- **Text a doctor:** You can ask questions via text and one of the doctors will reply to you within an hour.
- **Health tips:** You can get daily advice with Hello Doctor's health tips.
- **Symptom checker:** Not sure what is wrong? The checker will assist you in determining a health condition based on symptoms.

You can download the Hello Doctor app by visiting the Apple App or Google Play stores. Alternatively, log in via the Hello Doctor website at [www.hellodocor.co.za](http://www.hellodocor.co.za) or dial \*120\*1019# and follow the prompts.



If you require assistance, contact Hello Doctor on **087 230 0002**, email [info@hellodocor.co.za](mailto:info@hellodocor.co.za) or, alternatively, send a WhatsApp to **073 778 4632**.



# Important contact details



## Who to call to get in touch with the Fund

Services	Contact numbers
Customer service department (general queries)	0800 110 268
Chronic medication application	0800 122 263
Hospital and major medical pre-authorisation	0800 225 151
Optical services (PPN)	0861 103 529
Dental services (DENIS)	0860 104 941
HIV/AIDS	0860 109 793
Ambulance authorisation	0800 115 750
Fraud hotline	0800 000 436
WhatsApp	0860 005 037

## Important email addresses

Services	Email addresses
Enquiries	<a href="mailto:enquiries@transmed.co.za">enquiries@transmed.co.za</a>
Banking details and membership	<a href="mailto:membership@transmed.co.za">membership@transmed.co.za</a>
Compliments	<a href="mailto:compliments@transmed.co.za">compliments@transmed.co.za</a>
Complaints	<a href="mailto:complaints@transmed.co.za">complaints@transmed.co.za</a>
Appeals	<a href="mailto:appeals@transmed.co.za">appeals@transmed.co.za</a>
Claims	<a href="mailto:claims@transmed.co.za">claims@transmed.co.za</a>
Ex gratia	<a href="mailto:exgratia@transmed.co.za">exgratia@transmed.co.za</a>
Suggestions	<a href="mailto:suggestions@transmed.co.za">suggestions@transmed.co.za</a>

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