



# rans care



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MEDICAL FUND

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Welcome to the second edition of TransCare for 2024

# Principal Officer's note



**Petrus  
Wassermann**  
*Principal Officer*

## Welcome to the second edition of TransCare for 2024.

With winter fast approaching, many of our members may get flu. The best way to reduce your and your family's risk of flu is to get vaccinated. The Fund covers one flu vaccine per beneficiary per year from insured benefits.

The following tips can help protect you against flu: avoid contact with people who are sick, stay at home if you are sick, cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, wash your hands regularly, manage your stress, get enough sleep, eat nutritious food, drink plenty of fluids and clean frequently touched surfaces.

If you have an email address and you have not updated the information, please contact the customer service department on **0800 110 268** or send an email to **[membership@transmed.co.za](mailto:membership@transmed.co.za)**. Please include your membership number on all correspondence to the Fund.

In this edition we cover eye allergies, also called allergic conjunctivitis. They occur when the eyes react to something that irritates them. Also included is an article on overactive bladder or OAB, which causes the sudden urge to urinate and may be hard to control.

We hope that you will take the time to read this 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.

Warm regards

**Petrus Wassermann**  
*Principal Officer*

# Eye allergies

Eye allergies, which are also called allergic conjunctivitis, are quite common. They occur when the eyes react to something that irritates them. The eyes produce a substance called histamine to fight off the allergen. As a result, the eyes and eyelids become red, swollen and itchy. The eyes can tear up and burn. Unlike other kinds of conjunctivitis, eye allergies do not spread from person to person.

People who have eye allergies commonly have nasal allergies as well, with an itchy, stuffy nose and sneezing. It is usually a temporary condition associated with seasonal allergies.

You can get eye allergies from pet dander, dust, pollen, smoke, perfumes or even food. If you cannot avoid the cause, your allergies can be more severe. You can have significant burning and itching and even sensitivity to light.

## What are the symptoms of eye allergies?

The most common eye allergy symptoms include:

- red, swollen or itchy eyes
- burning or tearing up of the eyes
- sensitivity to light.

If accompanied by nasal allergies, you may also have a stuffy, itchy nose and sneezing. You can also have a headache, an itchy or sore throat or coughing.

## What causes eye allergies?

An allergy is when the body's immune system reacts to an allergen that is normally harmless. When an allergen comes in contact with your eyes, certain cells within your eyes (called mast cells) release histamine and other substances to fight off the allergen. This reaction causes your eyes to become red, itchy and watery.

Allergens in the air, both indoors and outdoors, cause many eye allergies. These allergens include:

- pollen from grass, trees and certain weeds
- dust
- dead skin cells shed by cats, dogs or other animals
- mould
- smoke.

Allergic reactions to perfume, cosmetics or drugs can also cause the eyes to have an allergic response. Some people may be allergic to the preservative chemicals in lubricating or prescribed eye drops. They should use preservative-free drops instead, if possible.

Sometimes the eyes can react to other allergens that don't necessarily come into direct contact with the eye. These can include specific food or insect bites or stings.



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Some people inherit eye allergies from their parents. You're more likely to have allergies if both of your parents have them than if only one does.

## How are eye allergies treated?

The key to treating eye allergies is to avoid or limit contact with the substance causing the problem. But you have to know what to avoid.

### Avoiding allergens

- If you are allergic to pollen, avoid going outdoors as much as possible when pollen counts are highest. Pollen counts are usually highest in the mid-morning and early evening. Also, avoid being outdoors when wind blows pollen around. When you are outdoors, sunglasses or eyeglasses can help to prevent pollen from getting into your eyes.
- Keep your windows closed both in your car and home. This will help lower your exposure to pollen and other irritants while you are inside.
- If mould is an allergy trigger for you, recognise that high humidity can cause it to grow. Clean high-humidity areas like bathrooms and kitchens often. Consider using a dehumidifier in particularly humid or moist places.
- If dust at home brings on your allergic conjunctivitis, try to keep dust mites away from your skin. Use allergen-proof mattress covers and pillows. Wash your bedding frequently with hot water.
- When cleaning floors, use a damp mop, rag or vacuum cleaner to trap the allergens instead of a dry dust mop or broom.
- If pets are a source of allergies for you, try to keep animals outside the house as much as possible. It is particularly important not to allow a pet into your bedroom so that you can sleep in an allergen-free room. Always wash your hands after touching a pet and wash clothing that you have worn around pets.

**Finally, always avoid rubbing your eyes, which only irritates them more.**

**Source:** <https://www.aaa.org/eye-health/diseases/allergies>

# Diabetes can harm your teeth and gums: Tips for good oral health

If your diabetes is not well-controlled, you have a higher chance of getting mouth infections, particularly periodontal (gum) disease. This disease can damage your gums and the bones that hold your teeth in place and it might make it painful to chew. Sometimes, people with serious gum disease even lose their teeth.

Diabetes and some medication used to treat diabetes can cause a dry mouth. Saliva protects the tissues in your mouth as it washes away food particles, prevents bacteria from growing and fights acid formed by the bacteria in your mouth. When your mouth is dry, you have a higher risk of dental cavities and gum disease.



Diabetes can also increase the amount of glucose in your saliva. Bacteria in your mouth uses the glucose and forms a soft, sticky film called plaque. This in turn builds up on your teeth near your gum line and hardens into a deposit called tartar, which can cause gum disease.

Take time to check your mouth regularly. If you notice any of the following signs of oral health problems, tell your dentist right away:

- dry mouth
- bad breath or taste in your mouth that does not go away when you brush your teeth
- gums bleed when you brush and floss
- sore gums or painful white patches
- loose teeth or gums pulling away from your teeth
- if you wear dentures, a change in the fit of the dentures.

The good news is that you can keep your teeth and gums healthy even if you have diabetes. Here are some important things to do:

- Keep your blood glucose levels under control.
- Brush your teeth with a small, soft-bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste for two minutes at least twice a day, i.e. every morning and every night.
- Floss every day to clean between your teeth (once daily or at least four times a week).
- Avoid sweets, sugary food and sugar-filled drinks. If you do eat or drink these, limit them to mealtimes. Read nutritional content labels on food packaging. Limit sugar to 25 g (six teaspoons) or less per day.
- Make it a habit to rinse your mouth with water after every meal.
- If you smoke, try to quit. If you are finding it difficult to quit smoking, reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke to start off with. Smoking makes gum disease worse and it makes it more difficult to manage blood sugar levels.
- Visit a dental healthcare professional at least once a year for routine checkups or more often if your dentist says you need it. Be sure to tell the dentist that you have diabetes and give him or her a list of any medication items you take.

Periodontal disease can make it hard to control your blood sugar levels. Taking good care of your teeth and gums, including getting regular dental cleaning and treatment, will help you prevent these oral health problems or stop them from getting worse. Keeping your mouth healthy can have a positive impact on your overall health.

# Caring for your mental health

Your mental health is an essential part of living and wellbeing.

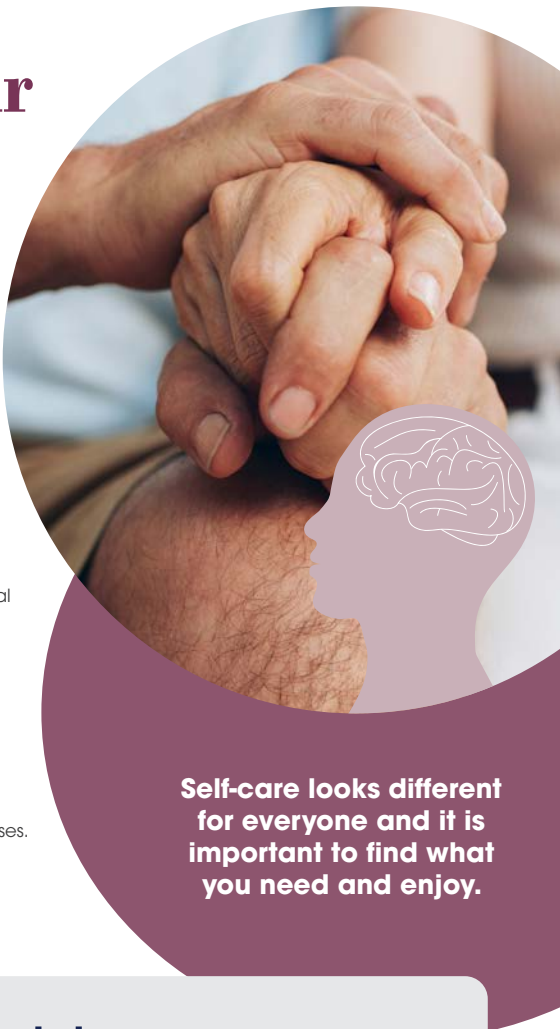
Mental wellbeing can be described as your mental state: how you are feeling and how well you can cope with day-to-day life. Our mental wellbeing is dynamic. It can change from moment to moment, month to month or year to year.

## How to take care of your mental health

Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical and mental health. This can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness and increase your energy. Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact.

Here are some self-care tips:

- If possible, get regular exercise.
- Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated.
- Make sleep a priority.
- Try a relaxing activity, such as doing breathing exercises.
- Set goals and priorities.
- Practise gratitude.
- Focus on positivity.
- Stay connected.



**Self-care looks different for everyone and it is important to find what you need and enjoy.**

## Overactive bladder

An overactive bladder, also called OAB, causes sudden urges to urinate that may be hard to control. There might be a need to pass urine many times during the day and night. There might also be loss of urine that isn't intended, called urgency incontinence.

### Symptoms

If you have an overactive bladder, you may:

- feel a sudden urge to urinate that's hard to control
- lose urine without meaning to after an urgent need to urinate



- urinate often; this can mean eight or more times in 24 hours
- wake up more than twice a night to urinate, called nocturia.

## Causes

The kidneys make urine, which drains into the bladder. When urinating, urine passes from the bladder through a tube called the urethra. A muscle in the urethra called the sphincter opens to release urine from the body.

As the bladder fills, nerve signals sent to the brain trigger the need to urinate. When urinating, these nerve signals cause the pelvic floor muscles and the muscles of the urethra, called the urinary sphincter muscles, to relax. The muscles of the bladder tighten or contract, pushing the urine out.

## Involuntary bladder contractions

An overactive bladder occurs when the muscles of the bladder start to tighten on their own, even when the amount of urine in the bladder is low. These are called involuntary contractions. They cause an urgent need to urinate.

Several conditions may lead to an overactive bladder, including:

- conditions that affect the bladder, such as tumours or bladder stones
- conditions that affect the brain and spinal cord, such as stroke and multiple sclerosis
- diabetes
- factors that get in the way of urine leaving the bladder, such as an enlarged prostate, constipation or having had surgery to treat lack of control over urinating, called incontinence
- urinary tract infections, which can cause symptoms like those of an overactive bladder.

Overactive bladder symptoms may also be linked to:

- cognitive decline due to ageing, which can make it harder for the bladder to use the signals it gets from the brain
- drinking too much caffeine or alcohol
- medicines that cause the body to make a lot of urine or that need to be taken with a lot of fluids

- not being able to get to the bathroom quickly enough
- not emptying the bladder all the way; this leads to not enough space in the bladder for more urine.

## Risk factors

Ageing increases the risk of an overactive bladder. So does being female. Conditions, such as an enlarged prostate and diabetes, can also increase the risk.

Many people with declining cognitive (thinking) ability, such as those who have had a stroke or suffer from Alzheimer's disease, get an overactive bladder. That's because they're less able to notice the symptoms of needing to urinate. Drinking fluids on a schedule, timing and prompting urination, absorbent garments and bowel programmes can help manage the condition.

Some people with an overactive bladder also have trouble with bowel control. Tell your healthcare professional if you're having trouble controlling your bowels.

## Prevention

These healthy lifestyle choices may reduce your risk of an overactive bladder:

- If possible, get regular, daily physical activity and exercise.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol intake.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Manage chronic conditions, such as diabetes, that might add to overactive bladder symptoms.
- Quit smoking.



**Source:** <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/overactive-bladder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355715>

## 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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