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MEDICAL FUND

TransCare

FOURTH EDITION OF 2025



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Principal Officer's note



Welcome to the last edition of **TransCare** for 2025.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Transmed Medical Fund, to wish you a happy festive season and a prosperous 2026.

In this edition, we have sourced articles we hope you will find educational. We focus on nocturnal leg cramps, as well as on vertigo, which is the sensation that you or your surroundings are spinning or moving. Also included in this edition are tips on preventing food poisoning and sun protection.

We trust that you will 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.

Yours in good health

Petrus Wassermann

Principal Officer



Nocturnal leg cramps

What are nocturnal leg cramps?

Nocturnal leg cramps are a tight, knotted feeling in your legs that happens at night. They can last several seconds to several minutes. If the cramp is severe, your muscle may be sore for days.

Leg cramps are different from restless legs syndrome. Both tend to happen at night, but restless legs syndrome causes discomfort and an urge to move instead of painful muscle cramps.

As much as they may hurt, leg cramps are harmless.



What causes leg cramps at night?

Experts don't know the exact cause of nighttime leg cramps. They could happen because your nerves send the wrong signals to your muscles. For example, your brain might mistakenly tell your leg to move while you dream. That confuses your calf muscles and causes them to contract.

You're more likely to have leg cramps if you:

- are 50 years of age or older
- work your muscles too much
- sit too long without moving
- don't drink enough water
- stand too long on hard surfaces, such as concrete.

Other health conditions can also raise your chances of leg cramps, including:

- diabetes
- neurological conditions like Parkinson's disease
- alcohol abuse
- low blood sugar
- some hormone disorders, such as hypothyroidism
- too much or not enough of certain chemicals in your body, such as calcium, potassium and magnesium
- flat feet
- pregnancy
- blood flow problems
- nerve damage.

Source:

<https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/leg-cramps>

Treating nocturnal leg cramps

The next time a leg cramp strikes, try some of these tips:

- Stretch the muscle.
- Get out of bed and stand with your foot flat on the floor. Press down firmly.
- Massage your leg. Rubbing the affected muscle may help it relax. Use one or both hands to gently knead and loosen the muscle.
- Flex your foot.
- Grab your toes and pull them toward you.
- Put ice on the affected area to relieve the cramp.
- Apply heat. Heat can soothe tight muscles. Apply a hot towel, hot water bottle or heating pad to the affected area. Taking a warm bath or shower may also help.

Nocturnal leg cramp prevention

Some simple things might keep you from getting leg cramps:

- Stretch during the day and before bed. Focus on your calf and foot muscles.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Move around during the day to exercise your feet and legs.
- Wear comfortable, supportive shoes.
- Sleep under loose covers, especially if you sleep on your back.



Vertigo

Vertigo is a sensation that you or your surroundings are spinning or moving. It's usually a symptom of a problem with the part of your inner ear or brain that keeps you balanced.

Types of vertigo

Vertigo has two main types: peripheral and central. The difference between the two types is what causes them.

Peripheral vertigo

This is the most common type of vertigo. It happens because of a problem with your inner ear or the vestibular nerve in your brain. These structures help you stay balanced. One cause of peripheral vertigo is benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), which is an inner ear disorder. BPPV causes vertigo when you move your head a certain way, such as tipping it backward.

Central vertigo

This less common type of vertigo stems from a problem in the brain, such as a stroke or infection. It causes more severe symptoms, such as difficulty walking.

Causes

Vertigo often happens because of an inner ear problem. Some of the most common causes include:

- **Benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV):** This inner ear disorder happens when tiny calcium particles (canaliths) get dislodged from their normal location and collect in the inner ear. The inner ear sends signals to the brain about your head and body movements to help you keep your balance. BPPV can occur for no known reason and may worsen as you get older.
- **Meniere's disease:** This inner ear disorder may be caused by a buildup of fluid and changing pressure in the ear. It can cause episodes of vertigo along with ringing in the ears (tinnitus) and hearing loss.
- **Vestibular neuritis or labyrinthitis:** This inner ear problem is usually related to a viral infection, such as chickenpox, measles or hepatitis. The infection inflames nerves that help your brain keep you balanced.

Can stress cause vertigo?

Dizziness and a spinning sensation can be symptoms of stress and anxiety. The same areas of the brain may be involved in producing feelings of anxiety and dizziness. Stress is also a risk factor for labyrinthitis, a cause of vertigo.

Vertigo can also happen because of:

- a head or neck injury
- brain problems, such as a stroke or tumour
- certain medications that cause ear damage, including some antibiotics, heart drugs and anti-inflammatory medicines
- migraines
- ear infection
- acoustic neuroma, which is a non-cancerous tumour in the ear
- stroke
- dehydration
- irregular heart rhythms
- ear surgery
- low blood pressure
- diseases such as multiple sclerosis or diabetes
- otosclerosis or abnormal bone growth in the middle ear.

Symptoms

Vertigo is often triggered by a change in the position of your head. People with vertigo typically describe it as feeling like they are:

- spinning
- tilting
- swaying
- unbalanced
- being pulled in one direction.

Other symptoms that may accompany vertigo include:

- nausea
- vomiting
- abnormal or jerking eye movements (nystagmus)
- headache
- sweating
- ringing in the ears or hearing loss
- a feeling of fullness in the ear
- double vision
- difficulty swallowing
- slurred speech
- weakness in your arms and legs
- trouble moving your face.

How long does vertigo last?

Each vertigo attack can last from a few seconds to several hours, but the feeling of being off-balance may stay with you for much longer. For people with severe vertigo, attacks can sometimes last for days or months.

How to stop vertigo

You might not be able to stop vertigo with home remedies, but you can ease symptoms with a few self-care tips. Here are a few vertigo home remedies you can try:

- Drink more water, sports drinks or other fluids. Dehydration can make vertigo worse.
- Control stress. Practise relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or meditation, to calm anxiety before it can affect your balance.
- Limit caffeine, alcohol, salt and tobacco. These substances make dizziness worse.
- Lie in a dark, quiet room. This may help to relieve the spinning.
- Move slowly. Get out of bed, walk and turn your head slowly to prevent dizziness. Use a cane if you need it to avoid falling. Sit or lie down as soon as you start to feel dizzy. Bend from the knees instead of leaning over from the waist when you pick something up.

Source:

<https://www.webmd.com/brain/vertigo-symptoms-causes-treatment>



Preventing food poisoning

Don't let bad food spoil your celebrations this festive season. Follow safe food practices so everyone can keep enjoying the festivities after their meals.

Food poisoning is caused by contaminated food. Food can be contaminated when it is handled, stored or prepared incorrectly.

Some foods have a higher risk of causing food poisoning.

But before you start cooking, take a moment to look over some tips on food safety. They can help prevent you and others from getting sick.

When preparing food, **follow four basic steps**: clean, separate, cook and chill.

- **Step 1:** Wash your hands, countertop and cutting board with hot, soapy water. Make sure that knives and other cooking utensils are clean. Wash the lids of cans before opening. Rinse fruit and vegetables. (But don't rinse raw meat before cooking. Disease-causing microbes can splash out of the sink and spread.)
- **Step 2:** Be sure to separate foods. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs away from foods that won't be cooked. When shopping, put raw meat in a plastic bag. Keep it away from other items in your shopping cart and fridge.
- **Step 3:** Cook your food thoroughly to the proper temperatures. If you have one, use a food thermometer when cooking. Make sure that the inside of your food reaches the right temperature to kill bacteria (at least 74°C, depending on the food type).
- **Step 4:** Chill food in the refrigerator within two hours of cooking. Store it in clean, shallow containers with lids and use or freeze it within three to four days. And don't let hot foods cool before putting them in the fridge – put them in as soon as possible.



Beat the heat

Safeguard yourself from the heat

- Wear protective clothing such as hats with broad brims all around, long-sleeved shirts and trousers or long skirts to block out the sun's harmful rays.
- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) to block harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. Always apply sunscreen 20 minutes before you go outside and re-apply at least every two hours or after towel drying, perspiring or swimming.
- Wear sunglasses with UV protection.
- Stay out of the sun between 10:00 and 15:00 and stay under the shade of trees or an umbrella as much as possible.
- Stay hydrated.

IMPORTANT NOTICE! Ambulance service provider name change

The Fund's ambulance service provider, formerly known as Europ Assistance, has undergone a name change and is now known as **AZOZA**.

AZOZA should be contacted on 0800 115 750 in case of a medical emergency when an ambulance is required. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



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	031 574 3913

Important email addresses

Services	Email addresses
Enquiries	enquiries@transmed.co.za
Banking details and membership	membership@transmed.co.za
Compliments	compliments@transmed.co.za
Complaints	complaints@transmed.co.za
Appeals	appeals@transmed.co.za
Claims	claims@transmed.co.za
Ex gratia	exgratia@transmed.co.za
Suggestions	suggestions@transmed.co.za

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