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MEDICAL FUND

# TransHealth

FIRST EDITION OF 2025



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# Principal Officer's note



## Welcome to the first edition of **TransHealth** 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 450 010** to obtain the form. Complete it electronically or print it out.

Congratulations to the winners of last issue's competition. In our first competition for 2025, there are once again excellent prizes up for grabs. We have included a brainteaser where we ask you to complete a puzzle to find a missing word through a process of elimination. All the words appear in this edition.

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.

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Other symptoms may include:

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



# Muscular dystrophy

## What is muscular dystrophy?

Muscular dystrophy refers to a group of more than 30 genetic (inherited) conditions that cause muscle weakness and other muscle-related symptoms. The symptoms of muscular dystrophy worsen over time. These conditions are a type of myopathy – a disorder of your skeletal muscles.

Depending on the type, muscular dystrophy can affect your ability to move, walk and perform daily activities. It can also affect muscles that help your heart and lungs function.

Some forms of muscular dystrophy are present at birth or develop during childhood. Other forms develop during adulthood.

## Types of muscular dystrophy

There are more than 30 types of muscular dystrophy. Some of the more common forms include:

- **Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD):**

This is the most common form of muscular dystrophy. It mainly affects boys, but girls can also have a milder version of it. As DMD progresses, it affects the heart and lungs.

- **Becker muscular dystrophy (BMD):**

BMD is the second most common type of muscular dystrophy. It mainly affects men, but women can have milder symptoms of the condition. Symptoms of BMD can appear at any time between the ages of five and 60, but they typically begin in the teenage years. The severity of BMD varies from person to person.

- **Myotonic dystrophy:**

This is the most common type of muscular dystrophy that's diagnosed in adulthood. It affects adult women and adult men equally. People with myotonic dystrophy have difficulty relaxing their muscles after using them. The condition can also affect your heart and lungs and cause endocrine issues, such as thyroid disease and diabetes.

- **Congenital muscular dystrophies (CMD):**

CMD refers to a group of muscular dystrophies that become apparent at or near birth ('congenital' means 'present from birth'). CMD causes overall muscle weakness with possible joint stiffness or

looseness. Depending on the type, CMD may also involve spinal curvature (scoliosis), breathing issues, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, eye issues or seizures.

- **Distal muscular dystrophy:** This type affects the muscles of your hands, feet, lower arms and lower legs. It tends to affect people in their 40s and 60s.

- **Emery-Dreifuss muscular dystrophy (EDMD):** EDMD mainly affects boys and young men. It tends to cause muscle weakness in the shoulders, upper arms and shins. EDMD also affects the heart. The condition usually progresses slowly.

- **Facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy (FSHD):** FSHD most commonly affects muscles in the face, shoulders and upper arms. Symptoms tend to appear before the age of 20. About four in 100 000 people have this form.

- **Limb-girdle muscular dystrophy (LGMD):** LGMD affects the muscles in the upper arms, upper legs, shoulders and hips. It affects people of all ages. Approximately two in 100 000 people have LGMD.

- **Oculopharyngeal muscular dystrophy (OPMD):** OPMD weakens muscles in your eyelids and throat. Symptoms, such as droopy eyelids (ptosis) and difficulty swallowing (dysphagia), often appear in people in their 40s or 50s. About one in 100 000 people have OPMD.



## What are the symptoms of muscular dystrophy?

The symptoms of muscular dystrophy can vary significantly depending on the type, but the main symptom is muscle weakness and other muscle-related issues. Each type can affect different muscles and parts of the body. Symptoms of muscular dystrophy generally get worse over time.

Muscle and movement-related symptoms can include:

- muscle atrophy
- difficulty walking, climbing stairs or running
- irregular walking gait (like waddling or toe walking)
- stiff or loose joints
- permanent tightening of your muscles, tendons and skin (contractures)
- spasticity (abnormal muscle stiffness)
- muscle pain.

Other symptoms can include:

- fatigue
- trouble swallowing (dysphagia)
- heart problems, such as arrhythmia and heart failure (cardiomyopathy)
- curved spine (scoliosis)
- breathing issues
- intellectual disabilities
- learning disorders.

The symptoms of some types of muscular dystrophy are mild and progress slowly over time as you age. Other types cause more rapid muscle weakness and physical disability.

## What causes muscular dystrophy?

Mutations (changes) in the genes that are responsible for healthy muscle structure and function cause muscular dystrophy. The mutations mean that the cells that would normally maintain your muscles can no longer fulfil this role, leading to progressive muscle weakness over time.

There are several genes and possible genetic mutations that play a role in muscle function. This is why there are so many different forms of muscular dystrophy.

In the majority of muscular dystrophy cases, the person inherits the genetic mutation from one or both of their biological parents.

There are three ways you can inherit muscular dystrophy, depending on the specific type:

- **Recessive inheritance:** This means you've inherited a genetic mutation that causes the condition from both of your biological parents. People with some forms of limb-girdle muscular dystrophy have this inheritance.

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- **Dominant inheritance:** This means you only need to inherit the mutated gene from one of your biological parents to develop the condition. People with myotonic, facioscapulohumeral and oculopharyngeal muscular dystrophies have this type of inheritance.
- **Sex-linked (X-linked) inheritance:** Men have one X and one Y chromosome and women have two X chromosomes. A genetic mutation on the X chromosome causes a sex-linked condition. As men only have one copy of each gene on the X chromosome, they'll develop the condition if one of those genes is mutated. A woman can have X chromosome-linked disorders, but the symptoms are usually less severe. People with Duchenne and Becker muscular dystrophies have this type of inheritance.

In rare cases, a person may develop muscular dystrophy spontaneously, meaning the mutation happened randomly and wasn't inherited. This is called a *de novo* mutation.

**Source:**

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/14128-muscular-dystrophy>

# Early detection

It is an unfortunate fact of life that the older we get, the more susceptible we become to chronic illnesses. We do, however, believe that it is possible to lead a healthier lifestyle if these chronic illnesses are detected sooner rather than later. The Fund provides a benefit for the following early detection screening tests. Members are encouraged to make use of this benefit as a measure of prevention.

Test	Who should go	Age	How often	Related condition
<b>Health-check benefit:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cholesterol (finger prick)</li><li>• Glucose (finger prick)</li><li>• Blood pressure</li><li>• Body mass index</li></ul>	All beneficiaries	Over the age of 25	One test per year	High cholesterol Diabetes mellitus High blood pressure
<b>Total cholesterol (lipogram)</b>	All beneficiaries	Over the age of 25	One test per year	High cholesterol
<b>Glucose (finger prick)</b>	All beneficiaries	Over the age of 25	One test per year	Diabetes mellitus
<b>Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) level</b>	Male beneficiaries	Over the age of 45	One test per year	Prostate cancer
<b>Pap smear</b>	Female beneficiaries	Over the age of 18	One test per year	Cervical cancer
<b>Mammogram</b>	Female beneficiaries	Over the age of 40	One test every two years	Breast cancer
<b>Faecal occult blood test (FOBT)</b>	All beneficiaries	Over the age of 50	One test per year	Colon cancer
<b>Quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR)</b>	Newborns with HIV	Newborns	Once in a lifetime	HIV

**Remember: Prevention is the first step in staying healthy.**

# 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.hellodoctor.co.za](http://www.hellodoctor.co.za) or dial \*120\*1019# and follow the prompts.



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



# 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.



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# Important contact details



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

Services	Link plan	Select and Prime plans
Customer service department	Universal Healthcare 0861 686 278 transmed@universal.co.za	0800 450 010 enquiries@transmed.co.za
Membership and contributions	0800 450 010	0800 450 010
Hospital and major medical pre-authorisation	Universal Healthcare 0861 686 278	0800 225 151
Disease programmes	Universal Healthcare 0861 686 278	0800 225 151
Ambulance authorisation	0800 115 750	0800 115 750
HIV/AIDS	Universal Healthcare 0861 686 278	0860 109 793
Dental services	Universal Healthcare 0861 686 278	0860 104 941 (Select plan) 0800 450 010 (Prime plan)
Optical services	Universal Healthcare 0861 686 278	PPN 0861 103 529 (Select plan) 0800 450 010 (Prime plan)
Fraud hotline	0800 000 436	0800 000 436
WhatsApp	0860 005 037	0860 005 037

## 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
External service provider for the Link plan (Universal Healthcare)	transmed@universal.co.za

### DISCLAIMER:

The information and articles in this newsletter do not constitute medical advice or a medical claim for any product of any nature whatsoever on behalf of the publisher, Fund, Administrator or the distributor. Consult a qualified healthcare practitioner for diagnosis or treatment of any diseases or medical conditions.

It is with great pleasure that we announce the **winners** of the test your knowledge competition from the **fourth edition** of TransHealth for 2024.

**First prize:** Mrs EJ Sypkens  
**Second prize:** Mr JG Mostert  
**Third prize:** Mrs JP Nelson

## ANSWERS FROM THE PREVIOUS COMPETITION

1. enquiries@transmed.co.za
2. Arrears
3. Mental well-being
4. Mouth
5. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and Hodgkin's lymphoma
6. FAP

# Win with Transmed

## Brainteaser competition

**We are giving away prizes to the winners of our brainteaser competition.** All you need to do is to complete the puzzle by circling the relevant words and finding the one that does not appear. The words may appear diagonally, vertically or horizontally. You will find the answers in this edition of the newsletter. The first correct entry will win R2 000. The second and third correct entries will each win R1 000. Please note that terms and conditions apply.

**You may use the following channels to forward your answers:**

- **Post:** Brainteaser Competition  
PO Box 2269  
Bellville  
7535
- **Email:** [enquiries@transmed.co.za](mailto:enquiries@transmed.co.za)
- **Fax:** 011 381 2041/42

**Your entry form must reach Transmed Medical Fund by no later than 15 May 2025.**

**Find the following words in the puzzle:**

DEPRESSION	SENSITIVITY
PHYSICAL	CONCENTRATION
MUTATIONS	ILLNESSES
PREVENTION	MUSCULAR
FATIGUE	FICTITIOUS
LEARNING	

**Missing word:** \_\_\_\_\_

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P Y I V D C V S U T G X T M A
S M O O R S J O U T N R S E K
N U Z P N O S W E O T U S G S
O T O K H O C M I X O S R R I
I A Z R U Y O S A I U R A K F
T T M N R T S R T K U C L U A
N I R S P E T I L Q F T U N T
E O O M R P T U C M C F C S I
V N I P J C S T I A G F S G G
E S E N I E Z L S W L J U E U
R D O F M H F N S L F Q M B E
P C K S E N S I T I V I T Y R
E K C T D S E W T I M G V T P
N L Q E S K A L E A R N I N G
I L L N E S S E S Q C R Y E X
    
```

Full name:

Physical address:

Postal address:

Email address:

Membership number:

Contact phone number:

### Terms and conditions

- The competition is only open to Transmed Medical Fund members and their registered dependants.
- Late entries will not be considered for the draw.
- Please note that entries may be posted, faxed or emailed to Transmed.
- Winners will be notified telephonically and their names will be published in the TransHealth magazine. Transmed may require the publication of the photographs of the winners.
- The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Entry into the competition signifies acceptance of all rules.