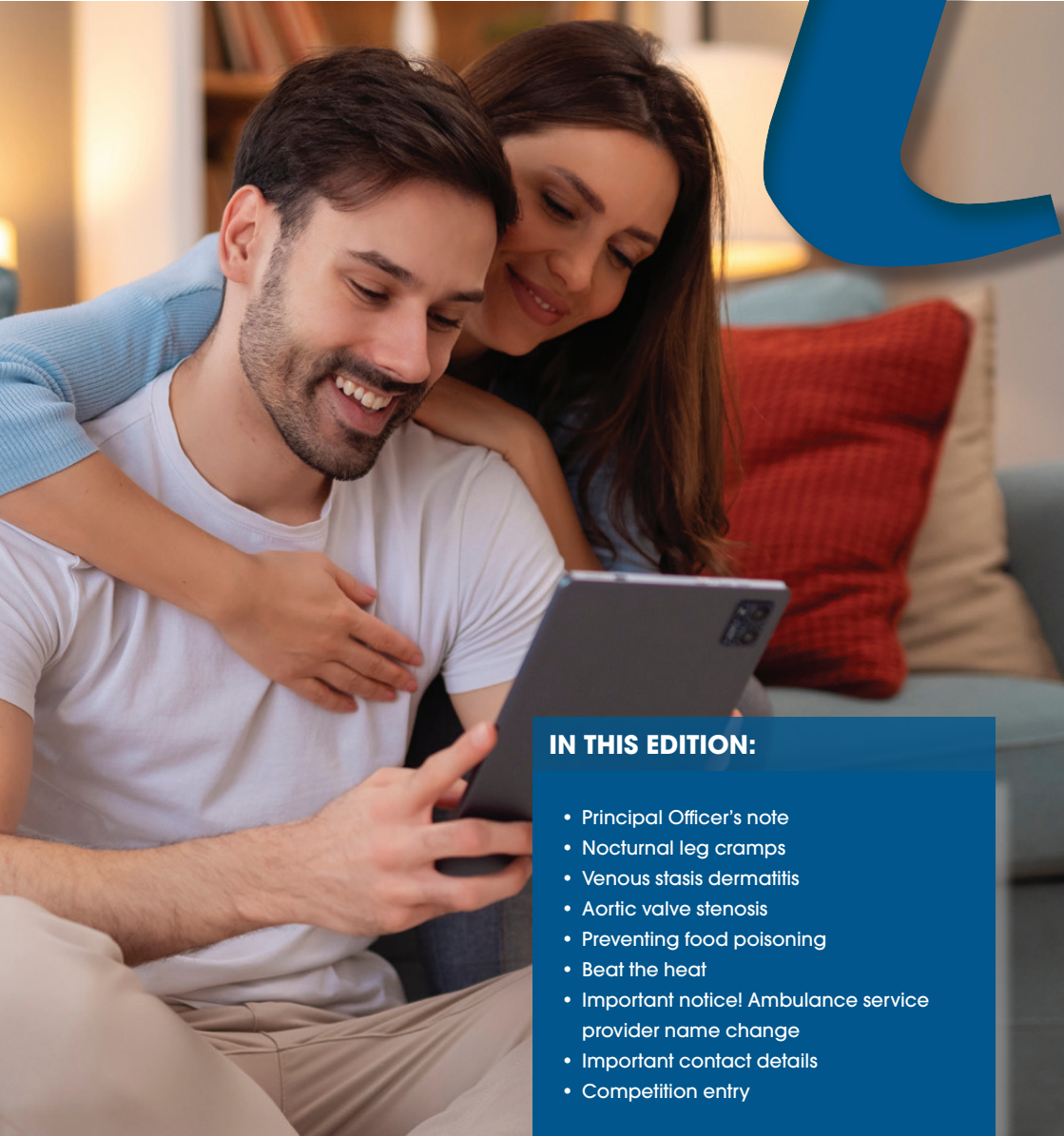




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MEDICAL FUND

TransHealth

FOURTH EDITION OF 2025



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Principal Officer's note



Welcome to the last edition of **TransHealth** 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 aortic valve stenosis, which is a type of heart valve disease, and venous stasis dermatitis, a skin inflammation of the lower legs caused by poor circulation. Also included in this edition are tips on preventing food poisoning and sun protection.

Congratulations to the winners of the competition in our previous edition. In this edition, 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.

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.

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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.

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.

Source:

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

Venous stasis dermatitis

Venous stasis dermatitis (also called venous eczema or stasis dermatitis) happens when a problem with your veins, usually in your lower legs, restricts blood flow. As more fluid and pressure build, some of the blood leaks out of your veins and into your skin. Medical treatment can help and you can do many things on your own to get the problem under control.

Symptoms

Swelling around your ankles is often the first sign you'll notice. It might get better when you sleep and then come back during the day when you're active again. Your legs might feel heavy when you stand or walk.

Other symptoms can include:

- skin around or above your ankles that looks reddish on lighter skin tones or brown, purple, grey or ashen on darker skin tones
- varicose veins, which look twisted, bulging and dark purple or blue
- itching
- pain
- sores that ooze, crust or look scaly
- thickened skin around your ankles or shins
- hair loss on your ankles or shins.

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Who gets venous stasis dermatitis?

The condition is more common in people who are 50 years of age or older. Women are more likely to have it than men. Some conditions that make you more likely to get venous stasis dermatitis include:

- high blood pressure
- varicose veins
- being very overweight
- heart conditions such as congestive heart failure
- kidney failure
- a blood clot, especially in your leg
- many pregnancies
- past surgery or injury in the area of past surgery
- standing or sitting for long periods of time or lack of exercise.

What causes venous stasis dermatitis?

The condition often affects people who have circulation problems. When your veins don't work well, they don't return blood back to your heart the way they're supposed to.

The veins in your legs have one-way valves that help blood move through. Their job is to push blood up your legs. As you get older or have other health problems, the valves may not work as they should. This is called venous insufficiency.

In some cases, these and other conditions can cause pressure to build, causing too little blood and oxygen to reach the skin.

How to control venous stasis dermatitis

A few changes to your daily habits can help you get your venous stasis dermatitis under control and keep it from getting worse:

- **Take breaks.** If your job keeps you sitting or standing for long periods, take time to move. If possible, take a brisk, 10-minute walk during lunch or tea breaks.
- **Exercise.** Moving makes blood flow better. Ask your doctor how often you should work out and what activities are safe for you.
- **Wear comfortable clothes.** Compression stockings are a good choice for your legs, but choose loose-fitting cotton clothes for the rest of your body. Tight or rough fabrics can irritate your skin and affect circulation.
- **Take care of your skin.** It could become easily irritated. When bathing, use only gentle cleansers and soft towels, followed quickly by a fragrance-free moisturiser. Avoid cleaning products, perfumes, grass, plants, pet hair or anything else that is likely to irritate your skin.

Source:

<https://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/eczema/venous-stasis-dermatitis>

Aortic valve stenosis

Aortic valve stenosis is a type of heart valve disease, also called valvular heart disease. The aortic valve lies between the lower left heart chamber and the body's main artery, called the aorta. In aortic valve stenosis, the valve is narrowed and doesn't open fully. This reduces or blocks blood flow from the heart to the aorta and to the rest of the body.

Symptoms

Aortic valve stenosis ranges from mild to severe. Symptoms generally occur when the valve is very narrowed. Some people with aortic valve stenosis may not have symptoms for many years.

Symptoms of aortic valve stenosis may include the following during increased activity:

- chest pain or tightness
- feeling faint or dizzy or fainting
- shortness of breath
- fatigue
- rapid, fluttering heartbeat.

Aortic valve stenosis may lead to heart failure. Heart failure symptoms include extreme tiredness, shortness of breath and swollen ankles and feet.

Causes

To understand the causes of aortic valve stenosis, it may help to know how the heart and heart valves typically work.

The heart has four valves that keep blood flowing in the correct way:

- aortic valve
- mitral valve
- tricuspid valve
- pulmonary valve.

Each valve has flaps – also called cusps – that open and close once during each heartbeat. Sometimes the valves don't open or close properly. If a valve doesn't fully open or close, blood flow is reduced or blocked.

In aortic valve stenosis, the valve between the lower left heart chamber or left ventricle and the body's main artery or aorta is narrowed and doesn't open completely. This narrowing is called stenosis.

When the aortic valve opening is narrowed, the heart must work harder to pump enough blood to the body. The extra work can cause the lower left heart chamber to thicken. Eventually the heart may become weak.

Aortic valve stenosis causes include:

- **Heart condition present at birth, called a congenital heart defect:** Some children are born with an aortic valve that has only two cusps instead of the usual three. If there are only two cusps, it's called a bicuspid aortic valve. Rarely, an aortic valve may have one or four cusps.
- **Calcium buildup on the valve, called aortic valve calcification:** Calcium is a mineral found in the blood. As blood moves over the aortic valve, calcium can collect on the valve. Calcium deposits may never cause any problems. Aortic valve stenosis that's related to increasing age and calcium deposit buildup usually doesn't cause symptoms until the age of 70 or 80 years. But in some people – particularly those with changes in the aortic valve at birth – calcium deposits might cause the valve to narrow at a younger age.
- **Rheumatic fever:** This complication of untreated strep throat can damage the heart valves. It may cause scar tissue to form on the aortic valve. Scar tissue can narrow the aortic valve opening. It may also form a rough surface on which calcium deposits can collect.



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Risk factors

Risk factors for aortic valve stenosis include:

- ageing
- congenital heart defects (some heart conditions present at birth), e.g. a bicuspid aortic valve
- long-term kidney disease
- heart disease risk factors, such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure
- infections that can affect the heart, such as rheumatic fever and infective endocarditis
- radiation therapy to the chest.

Prevention

Some possible ways to prevent aortic valve stenosis are:

- **Get a health checkup when you have a sore throat.** Strep throat (a sore throat caused by bacterial infection) that is not treated can lead to rheumatic fever, which can damage heart valves. Strep throat can usually be easily treated with antibiotics. Rheumatic fever is more common in children and young adults.
- **Keep the heart healthy.** Talk about your risk factors for heart disease with your healthcare providers. Ask how to prevent and manage them. Risk factors such as high blood pressure, obesity and high cholesterol may be linked to aortic valve stenosis.
- **Take care of the teeth and gums.** There may be a link between infected gums, called gingivitis, and a heart infection known as endocarditis. Endocarditis is a risk factor for aortic valve stenosis.

Source:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/aortic-stenosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20353139>



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:

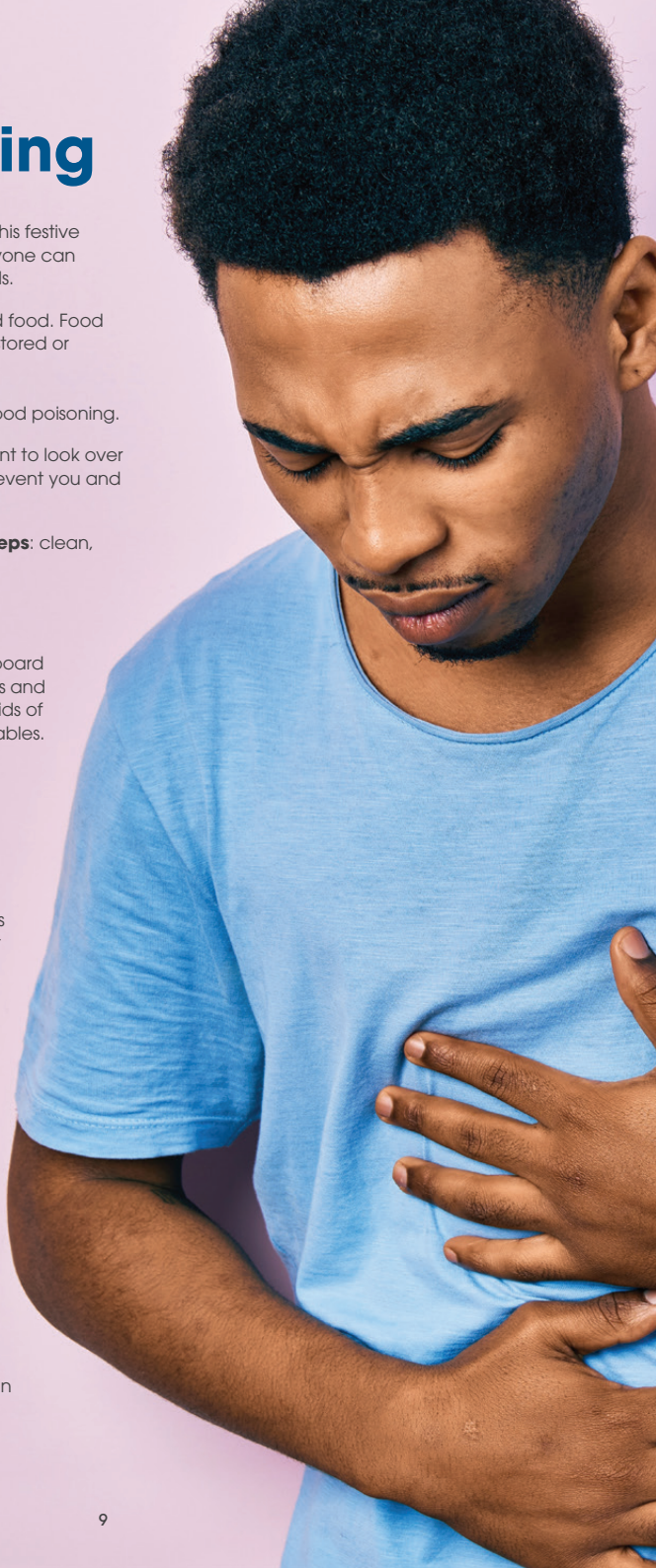
Be sure to separate foods. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs away from foods that won't be cooked. When shopping, put raw meat in a plastic bag. Keep it away from other items in your shopping cart and fridge.

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	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	031 574 3913	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
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 **winner**s of the test your knowledge competition from the **third edition** of TransHealth for 2025.

First prize: Mr PJ Odell
Second prize: Mr WM Fish
Third prize: Mr MN Inggs

ANSWERS FROM THE PREVIOUS COMPETITION

1. Once a year
2. Poor sleep
3. Sleep apnoea
4. RLS
5. Eye strain
6. 0800 115 750

Win with Transmed

Brainteaser competition

We are giving away prizes to the winners of our brainteaser competition. All you need to do is 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

Your entry form must reach Transmed Medical Fund by no later than 31 January 2026.

SUNGLASSES	CALCIUM
SHOPPING	CRAMPS
INFECTED	DISORDERS
RADIATION	PREVENTION
STENOSIS	SURGERY
DERMATITIS	

Missing word: _____

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

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 or emailed to Transmed.
- Winners will be notified telephonically and their names will be published in the TransHealth newsletter. 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.