

Trans health



transmed
MEDICAL FUND

FOURTH EDITION OF 2023

Welcome to the
latest edition of
TransHealth for
2023



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**Petrus
Wassermann**
Principal Officer

Principal Officer's note

Welcome to the
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As we approach summer, the following tips can help you to stay healthy: Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water, protect the skin from harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays with sunscreen and protective clothing, avoid prolonged exposure to high temperatures, take steps to prevent insect bites and stings, eat healthy food, wear protective eyewear to protect your vision from the harsh sunlight and stay cool.

In this edition we cover diabetic neuropathy, which is a type of nerve damage that can occur if you have diabetes. Also included is an article on atopic dermatitis (eczema), which is a condition that causes dry, itchy and inflamed skin.

The Transmed Member Trustee election has been concluded and we are very happy to announce the results. Mr J Groenewald and Mr L Ngaka were elected unopposed. The Trustees play a pivotal role in the management of the Fund and we wish them every success in their new positions.

To ensure that you receive communication from the Fund, please update your personal contact details with Transmed.

With regard to our competition, please read the newsletter carefully to answer the six questions about the topics in this edition correctly. I would also like to congratulate our winners of the last competition.

As this is our last edition for 2023, we wish you and your family a healthy, happy festive season. May the new year be filled with blessings, happiness, joy and health.

Should you wish to give us feedback, please do not hesitate to do so by sending an email to suggestions@transmed.co.za.

Warm regards

Petrus Wassermann
Principal Officer



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You can often prevent diabetic neuropathy or slow its progress with consistent blood sugar management and a healthy lifestyle.'

DIABETIC NEUROPATHY

Diabetic neuropathy is a type of nerve damage that can occur if you have diabetes. High blood sugar (glucose) can injure nerves throughout the body. Diabetic neuropathy most often damages nerves in the legs and feet.

Depending on the affected nerves, diabetic neuropathy symptoms include pain and numbness in the legs, feet and hands. It can also cause problems with the digestive system, urinary tract, blood vessels and heart. Some people have mild symptoms, but for others, diabetic neuropathy can be quite painful and disabling.

Diabetic neuropathy is a serious diabetes complication that may affect as many as 50% of people with diabetes. But you can often prevent diabetic neuropathy or slow its progress with consistent blood sugar management and a healthy lifestyle.

DIABETIC NEUROPATHY



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Symptoms

There are four main types of diabetic neuropathy. You can have one type or more than one type of neuropathy.

Your symptoms depend on the type you have and which nerves are affected. Usually, symptoms develop gradually. You may not notice anything is wrong until considerable nerve damage has occurred.

1 *Peripheral neuropathy*

This type of neuropathy may also be called distal symmetric peripheral neuropathy. It's the most common type of diabetic neuropathy. It affects the feet and legs first, followed by the hands and arms. Signs and symptoms of peripheral neuropathy are often worse at night and may include:

- numbness or reduced ability to feel pain or temperature changes
- a tingling or burning feeling
- sharp pains or cramps
- muscle weakness
- extreme sensitivity to touch – for some people, even a bedsheet's weight can be painful
- serious foot problems, such as ulcers, infections and bone and joint damage.





2 *Autonomic neuropathy*

The autonomic nervous system controls blood pressure, heart rate, sweating, eyes, bladder, digestive system and sex organs. Diabetes can affect nerves in any of these areas, possibly causing signs and symptoms, including:

- a lack of awareness that blood sugar levels are low (hypoglycaemia unawareness)
- drops in blood pressure when rising from a sitting position or lying down that may cause dizziness or fainting (orthostatic hypotension)
- bladder or bowel problems
- gastroparesis – a disorder that slows or stops the movement of food from your stomach to your small intestine, causing nausea, vomiting, the sensation of fullness and loss of appetite
- difficulty swallowing
- changes in the way the eyes adjust from light to dark or far to near
- increased or decreased sweating.

3 *Proximal neuropathy (diabetic polyradiculopathy)*

This type of neuropathy often affects nerves in the thighs, hips, buttocks or legs. It can also affect the abdominal and chest area. Symptoms are usually on one side of the body, but may spread to the other side. Proximal neuropathy may include:

- severe pain in the buttock, hip or thigh
- weak and shrinking thigh muscles
- difficulty rising from a sitting position
- chest or abdominal wall pain.

4 *Focal neuropathy (mononeuropathy)*

Mononeuropathy refers to damage to a single, specific nerve. The nerve may be in the face, torso, arm or leg. Mononeuropathy may lead to:

- difficulty focussing or double vision
- paralysis on one side of the face
- numbness or tingling in the hand or fingers
- weakness in the hand that may result in dropping things
- pain in the shin or foot
- weakness causing difficulty lifting the front part of the foot (foot drop)
- pain in the front of the thigh.



DIABETIC NEUROPATHY

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Causes

The exact cause of each type of neuropathy is unknown. Researchers think that over time, uncontrolled high blood sugar damages nerves and interferes with their ability to send signals, leading to diabetic neuropathy. High blood sugar also weakens the walls of the small blood vessels (capillaries) that supply the nerves with oxygen and nutrients.

Risk factors

Anyone who has diabetes can develop neuropathy. But these risk factors make nerve damage more likely:

- **Poor blood sugar control:** Uncontrolled blood sugar increases the risk of every diabetes complication, including nerve damage.

- **Diabetes history:** The risk of diabetic neuropathy increases the longer a person has diabetes, especially if blood sugar isn't well controlled.
- **Kidney disease:** Diabetes can damage the kidneys. Kidney damage sends toxins into the blood, which can lead to nerve damage.
- **Being overweight:** Having a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or more may increase the risk of diabetic neuropathy.
- **Smoking:** Smoking narrows and hardens the arteries, reducing blood flow to the legs and feet. This makes it more difficult for wounds to heal and damages the peripheral nerves.

Prevention

You can prevent or delay diabetic neuropathy and its complications by closely managing your blood sugar and taking good care of your feet.



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Foot care

Foot problems, including sores that don't heal, ulcers and even amputation, are common complications of diabetic neuropathy. To protect the health of your feet:

- **Check your feet every day.** Look for blisters, cuts, bruises, cracked and peeling skin, redness and swelling. Use a mirror or ask a friend or family member to help examine parts of your feet that are hard to see.
- **Keep your feet clean and dry.** Wash your feet every day with lukewarm water and mild soap. Don't soak your feet. Dry your feet and between your toes thoroughly.
- **Moisturise your feet.** This helps prevent cracking. But don't get lotion between your toes, because it might encourage fungal growth.
- **Trim your toenails carefully.** Cut your toenails straight across. File the edges carefully so that you have smooth edges.
- **Wear clean, dry socks.** Look for socks made of cotton or moisture-wicking (synthetic) fibres that don't have tight bands or thick seams.
- **Wear cushioned shoes that fit well.** Wear closed-toed shoes or slippers to protect your feet. Make sure your shoes fit properly and allow your toes to move.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetic-neuropathy/symptoms-causes/syc-20371580>



ATOPIC DERMATITIS (ECZEMA)

Atopic dermatitis (eczema) is a condition that causes dry, itchy and inflamed skin. It's common in young children, but can occur at any age. Atopic dermatitis is long-lasting (chronic) and tends to flare up sometimes. It can be irritating, but it's not contagious.

People with atopic dermatitis are at risk of developing food allergies, hay fever and asthma.

Moisturising regularly and following other skincare habits can relieve itching and prevent new outbreaks (flare-ups). Treatment may also include medicated ointments or creams.



Using petroleum jelly on your baby's skin may help prevent development of atopic dermatitis.*

Symptoms

Eczema symptoms can appear anywhere on the body and vary widely from person to person. They may include:

- dry, cracked skin
- itchiness (pruritus)
- rash on swollen skin that varies in colour, depending on your skin colour
- small, raised bumps
- oozing and crusting
- thickened skin
- darkening of the skin around the eyes
- raw, sensitive skin from scratching.

Atopic dermatitis often begins before the age of five and may continue into the teen and adult years. For some people, it flares up and then clears up for a time, even for several years.

Causes

In some people, atopic dermatitis is related to a gene variation that affects the skin's ability to provide protection. With a weak barrier function, the skin is less able to retain moisture and protect against bacteria, irritants, allergens and environmental factors — such as tobacco smoke.

In other people, atopic dermatitis is caused by too much of the bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* on the skin. This displaces helpful bacteria and disrupts the skin's barrier function.

A weak skin barrier function might also trigger an immune system response that causes inflamed skin and other symptoms. Atopic dermatitis is one of several types of dermatitis. Other common types are contact dermatitis (rash caused by an allergic reaction) and seborrheic dermatitis (dandruff). Dermatitis isn't contagious.

Risk factors

The main risk factor for atopic dermatitis is having had atopic dermatitis, allergies, hay fever or asthma in the past. Having family members with these conditions also increases your risk.

Prevention

Developing a basic skin care routine may help prevent atopic dermatitis flare-ups. The following tips may help reduce the drying effects of bathing:

- **Moisturise your skin at least twice a day.** Creams, ointments, shea butter and lotions seal in moisture. Choose a product or products that work well for you. Ideally, the best one for you will be safe, effective, affordable and unscented.

Using petroleum jelly on your baby's skin may help prevent development of atopic dermatitis.
- **Take a daily bath or shower.** Use warm, rather than hot, water and limit your bath or shower to about 10 minutes.

ATOPIC DERMATITIS (ECZEMA)



- **Use a gentle cleanser that does not contain soap.** Choose a cleanser that's free of dyes, alcohols and fragrance. For young children, you usually need only warm water to get them clean — no soap or bubble bath needed. Soap can be especially irritating to the skin of young children. For people of any age, deodorant soaps and antibacterial soaps can remove too much of the skin's natural oils and dry the skin. Don't scrub the skin with a washcloth or loofah.
- **Pat dry.** After bathing, gently pat the skin with a soft towel. Apply moisturiser while your skin is still damp (within three minutes).

The triggers for atopic dermatitis vary widely from person to person. Try to identify and avoid irritants that trigger atopic dermatitis. In general, avoid anything that causes an itch because scratching often triggers a flare-up.

Common triggers for atopic dermatitis include:

- rough wool fabric
- dry skin
- skin infection
- heat and sweat
- stress
- cleaning products
- dust mites and pet dander
- mold
- pollen
- smoke from tobacco
- cold and dry air
- fragrances
- other irritating chemicals.

Infants and children may have flare-ups triggered by eating certain foods, such as eggs, or drinking cow's milk. Talk with your child's healthcare provider about identifying potential food allergies.

Once you understand what triggers your atopic dermatitis, talk with your healthcare provider about how to manage your symptoms and prevent flare-ups.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/atopic-dermatitis-eczema/symptoms-causes/syc-20353273>

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Protect your Fund and report fraud

The Fund would like to encourage members to report fraud by contacting the fraud hotline. This service is operated independently from the Fund. Members and service providers can report any incidence of fraud by contacting **0800 000 436**. Please rest assured that your call will remain anonymous.

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.

IMPORTANT CONTACT DETAILS

Who to call to get in touch with the Fund

Service	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	Select plan 0860 104 941 Prime plan 0800 450 010
Optical services	Universal Healthcare 0861 686 278	Select plan PPN 0861 103 529 Prime plan 0800 450 010
Fraud hotline	0800 000 436	0800 000 436
WhatsApp	0860 005 037	0860 005 037

Important email addresses

Services	Email address
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

