



transmed
MEDICAL FUND

TransHealth

THIRD EDITION OF 2025



IN THIS EDITION:

- Principal Officer's note
- Sleep disorders and cardiovascular disease
- Be heart-healthy
- Eye strain
- Did you know? Interesting eye facts
- Important notice! Authorisations
- Helping your children take care of their teeth
- Healthy mouth, healthy you: Oral health tips for diabetics (Select plan members)
- Important contact details
- Competition entry

Principal Officer's note



Welcome to the third edition of **TransHealth** for 2025.

We have pleasure in presenting the third edition of TransHealth for 2025 and trust that you found the previous edition relevant and informative.

With winter behind us, we would like to wish you and your family a joyous spring.

Heart Awareness Month and Eye Care Awareness Month are both observed in September and in this edition we focus on these two health awareness themes.

Transmed hosted its Annual General Meeting in August 2025. Thank you to all the members who made an effort to attend.

We would like to encourage you to relax and have some fun by participating in the test your knowledge competition in this edition where you could stand a chance of winning one of our prizes. All you need to do is read the newsletter carefully and answer six questions.

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



Sleep disorders and cardiovascular disease

Getting enough quality sleep is an essential component of good heart and brain health. Sleep disorders cause sleep disruptions, make it difficult to get the rest you need to stay healthy and have been linked to a higher risk of cardiovascular disease.

There are more than 80 different types of sleep disorders. The most common sleep disorders include insomnia, narcolepsy, restless legs syndrome and sleep apnoea.

Research highlights how sleep disorders and poor sleep can negatively affect your heart health:

- Poor sleep can contribute to major cardiovascular disease risk factors, including obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes.
- Insufficient or irregular sleep can negatively influence diet, stress levels and other lifestyle factors that can raise the risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Excessive daytime sleepiness – a symptom of many sleep disorders and known as hypersomnia in its severest form – can lead to a greater risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Sleep deprivation and sleep disorders have also been linked to increased inflammation in the body, which can further elevate your risk of cardiovascular issues.
- Poor sleep and sleep disorders can contribute to depression and other mental health problems, which may also harm your heart health.

The most common sleep disorders

Insomnia

Insomnia is one of the most common sleep disorders. It affects your ability to fall asleep, stay asleep or get restful sleep. People with insomnia can experience excessive daytime sleepiness as a result of sleep difficulties, which can make it difficult to function throughout the day. Insomnia can also affect memory and cognitive skills. Short-term insomnia may be caused by stress or life changes. Chronic insomnia occurs when you experience symptoms at least three nights a week for at least three months.

Symptoms of insomnia include:

- difficulty falling asleep
- difficulty staying asleep
- poor sleep quality
- daytime sleepiness and low energy
- trouble with concentration, focus and memory
- increased risk of depression, anxiety and irritability.

Narcolepsy

Narcolepsy is a chronic, debilitating sleep disorder characterised by excessive daytime sleepiness and an inability to regulate sleep-wake cycles normally. If you have narcolepsy, you may experience 'sleep attacks' where you unintentionally fall asleep for short periods despite trying to stay awake. These sleep attacks can occur at inappropriate or potentially dangerous times, such as during daily activities like walking, eating or driving.

There is no cure for narcolepsy and it is a lifelong condition, but medication and lifestyle adaptations can help you manage it.

Symptoms of narcolepsy include:

- excessive daytime sleepiness
- episodes of irresistible sleepiness (called 'sleep attacks')
- difficulty staying awake
- frequent nighttime awakenings
- hallucinations
- being awake, but unable to move (sleep paralysis)
- sudden muscle weakness or loss of muscle control (cataplexy).

Restless legs syndrome

Restless legs syndrome (RLS) is a neurological disorder that causes your legs to feel uncomfortable or unsettled. It can feel like there's a 'creeping' sensation in your legs and you may feel an irresistible urge to move them. RLS makes it difficult to sleep, because symptoms are often the worst at night and when you're trying to rest. It can also wake you up and make it hard to fall back asleep.

There is no cure, but treatment is available that can help you manage the symptoms.

Symptoms of RLS include:

- an irresistible urge to move your legs
- discomfort in your legs; this may include aching, creeping, itching, throbbing and other painful or uncomfortable sensations
- difficulty falling asleep, as symptoms often occur at night or during rest
- difficulty staying asleep
- fatigue and daytime sleepiness
- problems with memory, focus and concentration
- mood swings
- depression and anxiety.

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Sleep apnoea

Sleep apnoea is a condition that affects your breathing during sleep. It causes your breathing to stop and restart and can make it difficult for your body to get enough oxygen. Episodes of disrupted breathing typically last at least 10 seconds and occur frequently throughout the night.

There are two main types of sleep apnoea:

- **Obstructed sleep apnoea** occurs when the soft tissue in your throat relaxes and makes it difficult to breathe.
- **Central sleep apnoea** happens when your brain has trouble regulating your breathing.

Symptoms of sleep apnoea include:

- irregular breathing during sleep
- loud snoring or gasping
- excessive daytime sleepiness
- morning headaches
- problems with concentration and memory
- mood or behavioural changes, including irritability
- anxiety or depression.

The recommended amount of sleep is between seven and nine hours a night.

Improve your sleep quality – improve your heart health.

Source:

<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/sleep-disorders/sleep-and-heart-health>





Be heart-healthy

Here are some tips that can help you to improve your heart health:

- Avoid smoking.
- Cut down on salt.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Be physically active.
- Monitor blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol.
- Manage your stress levels.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

Eye strain

Eye strain is a common form of eye discomfort that can occur when the eyes tire after you have been doing a particular visual task for very long.

What causes eye strain?

Eye strain is caused by intensely focusing your eyes during a task. Causes can include:

- driving
- reading
- computer and cell phone use
- playing video games
- doing detailed work, such as writing, sewing or crafting
- not having enough available light while doing a task
- not blinking enough.

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Digital devices can also cause eye strain because of glare or when there is poor contrast between the words on the screen and the background. Improper distance from the screen and poor lighting can also lead to eye strain.



Who gets eye strain and who is at risk?

Eye strain occurs most often among people who do close-up work, read a great deal or spend long periods watching television or using a computer. Visual problems, such as eye strain and irritation, are among the most frequently reported complaints from computer users.

Symptoms and signs of eye strain

Symptoms of eye strain may include:

- headaches
- blurred or double vision
- pain in the eye
- red, watery eyes
- dry eyes that feel scratchy or uncomfortable
- burning sensation when you close your eyes
- aching heaviness of the eyelids or forehead, especially around the eyebrows
- back aches and neck aches
- spasms in the muscles surrounding the eyes
- twitching eyelids.

How to relieve and prevent eye strain

- Ensure that any close-up work or computer screen is not too close to your eyes. As a general rule, view reading material from as great a distance as possible, provided it can still be easily read.
- Take frequent vision breaks (at least every hour) to relax your eye muscles. Try closing your eyes and relaxing for one minute. Other useful exercises may include rolling or blinking your eyes or closing them tightly for a few seconds.
- Changing focus is another way to relieve eye muscles. Every 15 to 30 minutes, look across the room or out of the window at an object at least six metres away for at least 20 seconds.
- You can tire your eyes if you have to alternate frequently between focusing on two objects placed at different distances. If you have to focus on more than one area up close (for example, when you are using printed reading material and a computer screen simultaneously), keep the objects viewed at the same distance and as close to each other as possible. This helps to reduce focusing changes.

- Workstations and lighting should be arranged to avoid direct and reflected glare anywhere in your field of vision. Place the computer or TV screen where there is no glare from windows or lights and keep screens clean and dust-free. Use a glare filter on the screen if lighting cannot be modified.
- Position the top of your computer monitor or TV screen at (or slightly below) eye level, so you can look down towards it. This can help with dry eyes. More of the eye surface is covered by the eyelid when you look down, with the result that your eyes blink more and produce more lubrication.
- Wear sunglasses that reduce glare and provide 100% protection from ultraviolet rays while you are driving or working outside, especially on bright or hazy days. Sunglasses also prevent squinting that may strain eye and facial muscles. If you're going on a long car trip, stop every few hours to rest your eyes and stretch your muscles.
- When reading, knitting or drawing, hold your material about 30 cm to 40 cm away from your eyes. Ensure you have adequate soft light (a 60-watt to 100-watt bulb or equivalent) behind you.
- When using a computer or similar equipment, room lighting should not be as bright as the screen. To reduce troublesome contrast, find a way to darken the area around the screen. Keep your computer monitor in proper focus.
- While you are watching TV, the room lighting should be about 50% dimmer than the screen. Don't watch in darkness, because this makes the contrast in light too great. Avoid viewing from an angle and sit at a reasonable distance from the TV (about four or five times the width of the screen). In other words, in the case of a 50 cm screen, sit about 2 m to 2.5 m away. People with poorer sight may need to sit closer. Children with uncorrected short-sightedness often sit close to the screen in order to see more clearly. An ophthalmologist (eye specialist) or optometrist can diagnose this condition and prescribe corrective glasses.
- If your eyes feel particularly dry after any visual activity, try an over-the-counter teardrop product containing polyvinyl alcohol (a wetting agent) or methylcellulose (a lubricant).

Source:

<https://www.mediclinicinfohub.co.za/eyestrain/>

Did you know? Interesting eye facts

- The world's most common eye colour is brown.
- The most active muscles in your body are in your eyes.
- You blink about 15 to 20 times per minute.
- The average blink lasts about a third of a second.
- Eyes heal very quickly.
- The human eye can distinguish more than 10 million unique colours.
- You blink considerably less when using a computer, reading a cell phone or viewing other digital devices.
- Eye muscles are the fastest contracting muscles in the human body.





Important notice!

Authorisations: Certain benefits require pre-authorisation before treatment is received. These are detailed in your **benefits guide**.

Helping your children take care of their teeth

Regular dental check-ups are essential for maintaining a lifetime of good oral health and your child's first visit to the dentist is a milestone worth celebrating.

We encourage you to take your child to the dentist within six months of their first tooth coming in or by their first birthday. This early visit helps catch any potential issues and gets your child used to the sights and sounds of the dental office. The first visit is usually short. The dentist will check your child's teeth, gums and mouth to make sure everything is developing well. They might also do a gentle cleaning.

Make dental visits fun

Just like adults, children should visit a dental healthcare practitioner at least once a year for a dental check-up and preventative treatment or more often if your dentist says it is needed.

We understand that taking your child to the dentist can be a bit nerve-wracking, but it is important that you continue to schedule routine visits. Here are some tips to make it easier and more fun for both you and your child:

- **Your attitude matters:** Speak positively about the dental visit. Children often look to their parents for cues on how to react in unfamiliar situations and if you are relaxed, it is more likely that they will be too.
- **Prepare your child:** Talk to your child about what to expect during dental visits. Use simple terms to explain the process, like 'The dentist will count your teeth and make sure they're healthy.' This makes the experience more understandable and less intimidating for them.
- **Role-playing:** Role-playing and storytelling can make the idea of dental visits fun. Let your child play dentist with their toys to make the actual experience less intimidating.
- **At the dentist:** Share your child's health history with your dental practitioner and inform them if your child tends to be anxious so that they can adjust their approach.

- **Bring a comfort item:** Sometimes a little comfort can go a long way. Bringing your child's favourite toy or blanket to the dental visit can provide them with a sense of familiarity that helps to create a stress-free environment.
- **The art of distraction:** Use books, toys or videos to distract your child during the visit. This becomes even more important as the visits become longer or if your child struggles to sit still during treatments. By redirecting their attention, the visit remains a positive experience.
- **Offer praise and encouragement:** Positive reinforcement is a powerful tool. Celebrate your child's cooperation during dental visits with verbal praise and encouragement. You can say things like, 'You did such a great job today!' or 'I'm so proud of you for being brave.' Occasionally, you might want to offer a small non-sugary treat, but prioritise verbal affirmation to build a lasting appreciation for oral health.
- **Oral healthcare at home:** Keep up a good oral hygiene routine at home. Continue to encourage a daily oral hygiene routine, as this can help prevent cavities and gum disease, reducing the need for additional treatment.

Remember: The goal is to make dental visits a routine and stress-free part of their lives. With a bit of preparation and encouragement, you can set your child on the path to a lifetime of healthy smiles.

Preventative dental treatment

- Ask your dentist for fissure sealants on your children's permanent teeth before they reach the age of 16. Fissure sealants for children are an easy and effective way of preventing tooth decay. These thin, plastic coatings are painted on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth, covering them to keep out germs and food.
- Topical fluoride treatment is covered for children younger than 16.

denis

Healthy mouth, healthy you: Oral health tips for diabetics (SELECT PLAN MEMBERS)

If you or one of your family members are living with diabetes, this article will offer helpful insights, practical tips and easy-to-follow guidelines to help maintain optimal oral health.

Why is oral health important for a diabetic patient?

Research has shown that diabetes affects many parts of the body, including the mouth. Diabetes increases the number of harmful bacteria that cause tooth decay and oral health complications. In some cases, these harmful bacteria make it difficult to keep sugar levels under control, thereby worsening your condition.

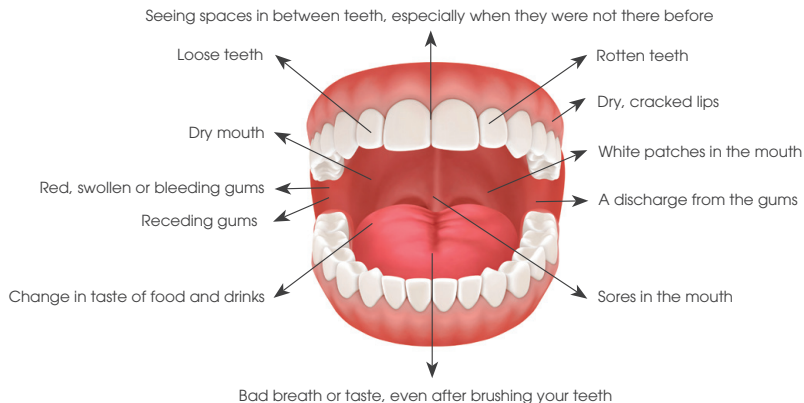
Diabetes can also increase the amount of glucose in your saliva. Bacteria in your mouth feed on the glucose, leading to more bacterial growth and the forming of a soft, sticky film called plaque. This in turn builds up on your teeth near your gum line and hardens into a deposit called tartar, which can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

If your diabetes is not well-controlled, you have a higher chance of 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.

How do I know if my oral health is affected by diabetes?

Take time to check your mouth regularly. If you notice any of the following signs of oral health problems, please make an appointment to visit your dentist. They will create a treatment plan to suit your specific oral health needs.

- Dry, cracked lips
- Dry mouth
- Bad breath or taste in your mouth that does not go away when you brush your teeth
- Change in taste of food and drinks
- Loose teeth or gums pulling away from your teeth (receding gums)
- Seeing spaces between teeth, especially when they were not there before
- If you wear dentures, a change in the fit of the dentures
- Rotten teeth
- Sores in the mouth
- Sore gums or painful white patches
- A discharge from the gums
- Gums bleed when you brush and floss



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Can I do anything to improve my oral health?

Yes, 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 fluoride toothpaste for two minutes every morning and night. Use a small- to medium-sized, soft-bristled toothbrush.
- After brushing your teeth at night, do not eat or drink anything other than water before you go to bed.
- Floss to clean between your teeth. Do this once daily or a minimum of three times a week.
- Avoid sweets, sugary food and sugar-filled drinks – make water your main drink.
- Make it a habit to rinse your mouth with water after every meal or snack.
- 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 the dentist a list of any medication you take.



Refer to the Transmed Dental Benefit Tables at www.denis.co.za for more information on your oral health benefits and how you are covered on your chosen option.

denis

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 brainteaser competition from the **second edition** of TransHealth for 2025.

First prize: Mr HG Buhr
Second prize: Mr PJ Odell
Third prize: Ms ME Basson

SOLUTION FROM THE PREVIOUS COMPETITION
Missing word: **IMMUNE**

Win with Transmed

Test your knowledge competition

We are giving away prizes to the winners of our test your knowledge competition. All you need to do is answer six questions. 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:** Test your knowledge Competition, PO Box 2269, Bellville, 7535
- **Email:** enquiries@transmed.co.za

Your entry form must reach Transmed Medical Fund by no later than 30 November 2025.

Question 1: How many times a year should you visit a dentist for a dental check-up and preventative treatment?

Question 2: What can cause major cardiovascular disease?

Question 3: Name the condition that effects your breathing during sleep?

Question 4: What is the abbreviation for restless leg syndrome?

Question 5: What is a common form of eye discomfort?

Question 6: Which number should you contact for ambulance services?

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 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.