

Muscular Dystrophy is a general term used to describe a range of conditions which result in the degeneration of muscular tissue. These muscle diseases are hereditary and progressive.

Signs of Muscular Dystrophy appear at any age. The Duchenne type is usually first noticed in toddlers, the Becker type in childhood or adolescence, others in adolescence or early adulthood.

The primary cause is a genetic defect. In the Duchenne and Becker types, the defect is in the gene which enables the muscle fibre to make dystrophin. Typical characteristics of muscular dystrophy include:

- Weakness of movement
- Unusual posture and gait
- Enlarged calf muscles

Some muscular dystrophies progress more rapidly than others. Also people with the same sort of Muscular Dystrophy may have different rates of progression. Once the disease reaches the stage that the child can no longer walk, care is focused on the maintenance of correct posture and supportive seating, provided by the treatment agency, is important in preventing the development of abnormal spinal curvature, e.g. Scoliosis.

As the condition progresses, physical activity becomes more difficult, with the legs being more rapidly affected than the arms. The muscles of the leg begin to tighten and muscle stretches (supervised by a physiotherapist) become important to maintain the child's function and comfort.

As yet, there is no cure for any of the muscular dystrophies. Medical management includes physiotherapy and a variety of other therapeutic activities directed at maximising the independence, physical capabilities, general health and quality of life of those people with Muscular Dystrophy.

The Child Care environment provides a child with Muscular Dystrophy the opportunity to participate in a variety of learning experiences, at a time when his/her motor skills are near their optimum. It also encourages social interaction, and the development of the skills of sharing and caring in all the children. For the family, Child Care can relieve some of the emotional pressures associated with the diagnosis of this condition, and this support will be welcomed by the parents.

For further information and advice, contact CHILD Australia.

5 Carson Road, Malaga WA 6090

Telephone: 08 9249 4333 ● Facsimile: 08 9249 4366

Email: [admin@childaustralia.org.au](mailto:admin@childaustralia.org.au) ● Website: <http://www.childaustralia.org.au>