



## HOW DM AFFECTS YOUR BODY

Myotonic dystrophy is a very complicated condition. The symptoms and disease progression can vary widely. The effects can be quite different even among members of the same family, so it is difficult to predict just how the disorder will affect you and your family. One person may only have mild muscle pain or cataracts that develop in later years, while someone else with the condition may be born with serious breathing problems.

The most common effects of DM are muscle problems, including muscle weakness (myopathy), trouble relaxing a muscle (myotonia), and muscle wasting that gets worse over time (atrophy). However, it is misleading to think of DM as only a muscle disorder because it also affects many other body functions, including the heart, lungs, and gastrointestinal (GI) system. The disorder can also cause problems with cognitive function, personality, and vision. Not everyone with DM will have all or even most of the possible symptoms.

Body system	Possible Effects
Skeletal muscles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muscle weakness (myopathy)</li> <li>• Muscle stiffness and trouble relaxing a muscle (myotonia)</li> <li>• Muscle wasting that gets worse over time (atrophy)</li> <li>• Severe muscle weakness and delayed development in newborns and infants</li> </ul>
Cardiac system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias)</li> <li>• Enlarged heart muscle</li> <li>• Low blood pressure</li> <li>• Sudden death</li> </ul>
Respiratory system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathing problems in newborns</li> <li>• Frequent lung infections</li> <li>• Aspiration of food or fluids into airways</li> <li>• Inability to breathe in enough oxygen</li> <li>• Sleep apnea</li> </ul>
Gastrointestinal (GI) system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty swallowing</li> <li>• Pain and bloating after meals</li> <li>• Constipation, diarrhea, irritable bowel syndrome, gastrointestinal reflux</li> <li>• Gallstones</li> <li>• Enlarged colon</li> </ul>
Brain and central nervous system (CNS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty with thinking and problem-solving</li> <li>• Emotional and behavior problems</li> <li>• Excessive daytime sleepiness</li> <li>• Nerve damage in feet and hands</li> </ul>
Reproductive system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small testes, low sperm count, low testosterone</li> <li>• Higher risk of miscarriage and stillbirth; early menopause</li> <li>• Problems with pregnancy and delivery</li> <li>• Newborn complications</li> </ul>
Hormones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insulin resistance</li> <li>• Premature frontal balding in men</li> </ul>
Immune system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower levels of antibodies in bloodstream</li> </ul>
Tumors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher risk of benign skin tumor (pilomatrixoma)</li> </ul>
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cataracts</li> <li>• Damage to the retina</li> <li>• Drooping eyelids (ptosis)</li> </ul>