



Shorter family joins fun run Condition no barrier for pair

FIONA HENDERSON

MAX and Will Shorter race at breakneck speed around their grandparents' backyard like normal little boys.

But unless a major medical breakthrough is made, the pair won't grow quite like their contemporaries.

Max, 5, and Will, 4, were diagnosed with Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) just before Christmas in 2013.

Parents Belinda and Leigh said they noticed the pair were slow to walk and didn't climb on couches or chairs like other kids their age.

Their calf muscles were also enlarged – a key sign of the muscle-wasting disease.

"Duchennes is the most common one, but it's also the worst one," Mr Shorter said.

"They will get progressively worse and their muscles will waste away."

Both boys have weekly physiotherapy sessions and steroid treatment is also planned.

DMD is a genetic condition that usually only affects males, so the Shorters' other boy Hudson, 2, will be tested soon.

Daughter Sofia is only five weeks old, but will be checked when she is older. "People with DMD can't produce (muscle protein) dystrophin so the muscles can't repair themselves," Mr Shorter said.

The pair's life expectancy will be between 20 and 30, although the Shorters have high hopes

medical trials will provide a breakthrough before the brothers reach that age.

"Research and trials have come a long way in the last 20 years," Mrs Shorter said.

To help boost research efforts – and to show support – Mrs Shorter's sister Joanne Phelps has organised a 50-strong Ballarat contingent to join the annual Muscular Dystrophy Australia

Run for Strength Fun Run in Melbourne on Sunday.

Hosted at Albert Park Lake, all funds raised go towards National Muscular Dystrophy Research Centre MD programs, services and research.

MDA's executive director Boris Struk said it was an "absolute privilege" to have the Ballarat group take part.

"At present there is no cure for muscular dystrophy and very little government funding for research," Mr Struk said.

"That is why we host this annual event to garner support and much-needed funds so we can give hope to the MD community that a solution may not be too far away.

"MDA has been able to provide in excess of one million hours of care and support for people with muscular dystrophy and so we welcome any help we are able to receive from the general public and businesses."

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AT A GLANCE
WHAT: Muscular
Dystrophy Australia Run
for Strength Fun Run
WHEN: Sunday, 8am
WHERE: Albert Park
Lake
COST: \$30 for five-
kilometre walk or run
or 10-kilometre run
MORE INFORMATION:
Call 9320 9555

INSPIRATIONAL: Brothers Max and Will Shorter have been diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. **PICTURE:** JEREMY BANNISTER