

LIVING WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Most people with MS find ways to manage their symptoms and function well.

Medications

Having MS means you'll need to see a doctor experienced in treating MS. If you take one of the DMTs, you'll need to adhere to the recommended schedule. Your doctor may prescribe other medications to treat specific symptoms.

Diet and exercise

Regular exercise is important for physical and mental health, even if you have disabilities. If physical movement is difficult, swimming or exercising in a swimming pool can help. Some yoga classes are designed just for people with MS. A well-balanced diet, low in empty calories and high in nutrients and fibre, will help you manage your overall health. Your diet should mainly consist of:

- A variety of fruits and vegetables
- Lean sources of protein, such as fish and skinless poultry
- Whole grains and other sources of fibre
- Nuts
- Legumes
- Low fat dairy products
- Adequate amounts of water and other fluids

The healthier your diet, the better your overall health. You'll not only feel better in the short term, but you'll also be laying the foundation for a healthier future. You should try to limit or avoid:

- Saturated fat
- Trans fat
- Red meats
- Foods and beverages high in sugar
- Foods high in sodium
- Highly processed foods

If you have other medical conditions, ask your doctor if you should follow a special diet or take any dietary supplements. It's helpful to learn how to properly read food labels. Foods that are high in calories but low in nutrients won't help you feel better or maintain a weight that works for you.

Other complementary therapies

Studies regarding the effectiveness of complementary therapies are scarce, but that doesn't mean these methods can't help in some way. The following therapies may help you feel less stressed and more relaxed:

- Meditation
- Massage
- Tai chi
- Acupuncture
- Hypnotherapy

MULTIPLE RISK FACTORS

The exact cause of MS is still unknown. However, there are several risk factors for developing MS. These risk factors include:

- Having a close relative with MS
- Obesity
- Certain infections
- Smoking
- Certain autoimmune disorders, like type 1 diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis

SUMMARY

It's almost impossible to predict how MS will progress in any one person. Life expectancy in those with MS is increasing. Your quality of life with MS will depend on your symptoms and how well you respond to treatment. But even though this unpredictable disease can change course without warning, it's rarely fatal. Most people with MS don't become severely disabled, and continue to lead full lives.



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PREHABILITATION HEALTH CONDITIONS MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Multiple sclerosis affects your nerves and causes symptoms such as fatigue, difficulty walking, and speech issues. There's no cure at the moment, but various treatments are available to help you manage the symptoms.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic condition involving your central nervous system (CNS). With MS, your immune system attacks myelin, which is the protective layer around nerve fibres. MS causes inflammation and temporary lesions. It can also lead to lasting lesions caused by scar tissue, which can make it hard for your brain to send signals to the rest of your body.

CAUSES OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

If you have MS, the protective layer of myelin around some of the nerve fibres of your brain, optic nerve, and spinal cord become damaged. It's thought that the damage is the result of an immune system attack. Researchers think there could be an environmental trigger, such as a virus or toxin, that sets off the immune system attack.

As your immune system attacks myelin, it causes demyelination. This can go into remission as new layers of myelin form, but chronic inflammation can lead to scar tissue, which can result in lasting neurological impairment.

MS isn't hereditary, but having a parent or sibling with MS raises your risk slightly. Scientists have identified some genes that seem to increase susceptibility to developing MS, according to a review of studies.

EARLY SIGNS MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

MS can develop all at once, or the symptoms can be so mild that you easily dismiss them. Three of the most common early symptoms of MS are:

- Numbness and tingling that affects the arms, legs, or one side of your face. These sensations are similar to the pins-and-needles feeling you get when your foot falls asleep. However, they occur without a trigger.
- Uneven balance and weak legs. You may find yourself tripping easily while walking or doing some other type of physical activity.
- Double vision, blurry vision in one eye, or partial vision loss. These can be an early indicator of MS. You may also have eye pain.

It isn't uncommon for these early symptoms to go away only to return later. You may go weeks, months, or even years between flare-ups. These symptoms can have many different causes. Even if you have these symptoms, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have MS.



MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SYMPTOMS

People with MS experience a wide range of symptoms. Due to the nature of the disease, symptoms can vary widely from person to person. They can also change in severity from year to year, month to month, and even day to day. Here are some of the most common symptoms associated with MS.

Fatigue

Around 80 percent of people with MS report having fatigue, according to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS). Fatigue that occurs with MS can make it harder for you to go about your everyday tasks.

Difficulty walking

Difficulty walking can occur with MS due to:

- Numbness in your legs or feet
- Difficulty balancing
- Muscle weakness
- Muscle spasticity
- Difficulty with vision

Vision problems

Vision problems are often some of the first symptoms for many people with MS. Vision problems may affect one or both eyes. These issues may come and go, or get worse over time. They can also resolve entirely.

Some common vision problems associated with MS include:

- Optic neuritis, which can cause pain or blurry vision in one eye
- Diplopia, or double vision
- Nystagmus, or involuntary movement of the eyes
- Blindness

Speech issues

MS causes lesions in the brain that can affect speech. These speech issues, also known as dysarthria, can range from mild to severe.

Symptoms of dysarthria can include the following:

- Slurred speech
- "Scanning" speech, where there are long pauses between words or syllables
- Changes in volume of speech

Other symptoms

Other fairly common symptoms of MS include:

- Acute or chronic pain
- Tremors
- Cognitive issues involving concentration, memory, and word-finding
- Difficulty chewing and swallowing
- Sleep issues
- Problems with bladder control.

If you have any concerns at all, speak to your GP about getting an exam. They will also talk with you about your clinical history and order a series of other tests to determine if you have MS.

TYPES OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Types of MS include:

Clinically isolated syndrome (CIS)

CIS is a pre-MS condition involving 1 episode of symptoms lasting at least 24 hours. These symptoms are due to demyelination in your CNS.

Although this episode is characteristic of MS, it's not enough to prompt a diagnosis.

If there's more than one lesion or positive oligoclonal band (OCB) in your spinal fluid at the time of a spinal tap, you're more likely to receive a diagnosis of RRMS.

If these lesions aren't present or your spinal fluid doesn't show OCBs, you're less likely to receive an MS diagnosis.

Relapsing-remitting MS (RRMS)

Relapsing-remitting MS (RRMS) involves clear relapses of disease activity followed by remissions. During remission periods, symptoms are mild or absent, and there's mild to moderate disease progression. RRMS is the most common form of MS at onset and accounts for about 85 percent of all cases, according to NMSS.

Primary progressive MS (PPMS)

If you have primary progressive MS (PPMS), neurological function becomes progressively worse from the onset of your symptoms. However, short periods of stability can occur. The terms "active" and "not active" are sometimes used to describe disease activity with new or enhancing brain lesions.

Secondary progressive MS (SPMS)

Secondary progressive MS (SPMS) occurs when RRMS transitions into the progressive form. You may still have noticeable relapses in addition to disability or gradual worsening of function.

Your MS may change and evolve – for example, going from RRMS to SPMS. You can only have one type of MS at a time, but knowing when you transition to a progressive form of MS may be difficult to pinpoint.

TREATMENT OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

No cure is currently available for MS, but treatment options exist that can help you manage your symptoms and improve your quality of life.

- **Disease-modifying therapies (DMTs)** – DMTs are designed to slow the progression of MS and lower your relapse rate.

Because MS is different for everyone, treatment depends on your specific symptoms. For most, a flexible approach is necessary.