

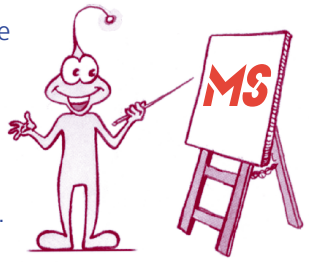


Multiple Sclerosis
Society of Canada

FACTS

for Persons
Recently Diagnosed
with
Multiple Sclerosis

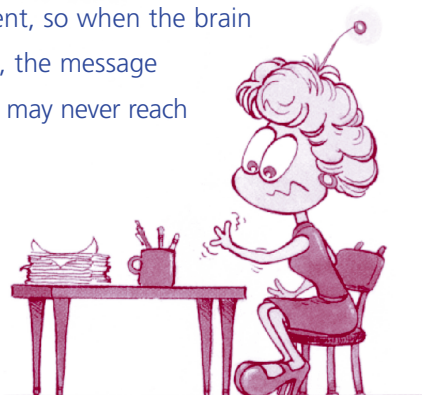
If you've just found out you have multiple sclerosis (MS), you're probably feeling overwhelmed. Before you read any further, remember that you're not alone.



For an adult in Canada, the probability of being diagnosed with MS is approximately 1 out of 500 to 1 out of 1000 people. While much has been discovered about this disease in recent years, research continues to look for more answers and new treatments.

Definition

- MS is a disease that affects the brain and the spinal cord (central nervous system).
- The brain is like a computer that sends messages to your body telling it what to do while the spinal cord resembles a thick cable of wires attached to the brain. Messages travel from the brain along the spinal cord to the nerves and muscles throughout your body.
- When a person has MS, the covering (myelin) that protects the nerves in the brain and spinal cord is affected and slows down the message or blocks it.
- Also, scar tissues (sclerosis) on the myelin further disrupt the message being sent, so when the brain tells the arm to wave, the message may not be clear, or it may never reach the arm at all.



Causes

While the causes of MS are still unknown, it's a fact that:

- it's not a mental illness;
- it's not contagious;
- AND it's not directly inherited, although studies do reveal a genetic predisposition.

Symptoms

Symptoms vary greatly from person to person and from time to time in the same person. They also vary in severity and duration. They might include:

- numbness or prickly feelings;
- eye trouble or speech problems;
- loss of coordination or balance;
- poor control of bladder or bowel movements;
- weakening or paralysis of any part of the body;
- unusual and extreme fatigue.

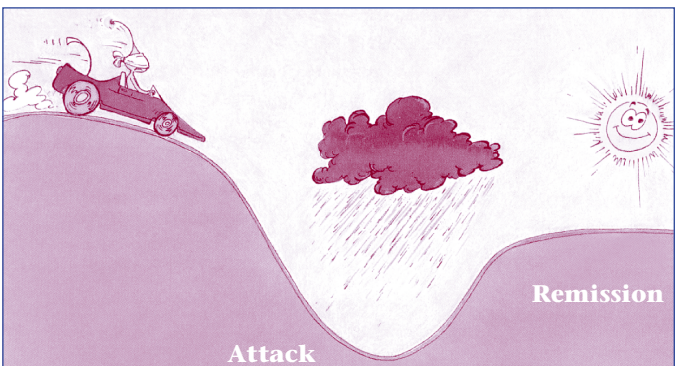
Remember, the majority of people with MS do not have all these symptoms. Every case is unique and unpredictable. You should consult your doctor or neurologist if you are unsure about your symptoms or develop new ones.

Types

At the time of diagnosis, it is not possible to predict how MS will affect you. Specialists recognize four main types of MS:

- Relapsing-Remitting MS is the most common type of MS at diagnosis. Attacks are followed by partial or complete recovery, succeeded by symptom-free periods.
- Secondary-Progressive MS begins with the initial Relapsing-Remitting form, which later results in a steady worsening of symptoms and disability.
- Primary-Progressive MS is characterized by steady worsening from the onset, usually without remission or a stable period. However, some people may experience temporary minor improvements.
- Progressive-Relapsing MS has clear, acute relapses from the beginning which leave significant disability. There is slow but progressive deterioration.

Yes, there are severe cases of MS, but always remember that the vast majority of people with MS lead fulfilling lives.



Expectations

Learning that you have MS can open up a flood of emotions, such as shock, denial, fear, anger, frustration, depression, guilt...

Finding out as much as you can about MS can help you deal with it. Simply talking about it may help you through these difficult moments.

Your doctor or neurologist can give you a diagnosis but cannot give a definite prognosis. In other words, they cannot predict what course the disease will take.

Early symptoms are often mild and go away without treatment. As time goes on, they may become more numerous and severe.

A typical pattern is a short period (**24 hours or more**) of acute symptoms, followed by an easing or disappearance of symptoms for weeks, months or even years.

Although many people associate MS with being in a wheelchair, some studies show that approximately 70% of persons diagnosed with MS will not require wheelchairs on a permanent basis.

Treatment

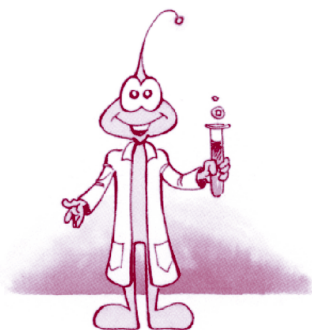
There is no known cure for MS yet, but several medication can lessen the frequency and severity of MS attacks. You should seek your doctor's advice on possible helpful medication and treatments. It is also important to look at the benefits of exercise, diet and stress management. Bear in mind that not all of your medical problems are caused by MS.

Research

Researchers are working to find drugs and other therapies to relieve MS symptoms and to stop the progress of MS.

Extensive research is currently being done in:

- myelin regeneration
- genetics
- immune system
- magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)
- role of viruses



Resources

You and your whole family can live with MS. The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada offers information, support and consultation, educational workshops, equipment assistance, self-help groups, social and recreational activities and more. Help is available and much can be done to assist you.

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is there for you

The MS Society is a national voluntary organization founded in 1948. Its mission is to:

- I. be a leader in finding a cure for MS, and
- II. enable people affected by MS to enhance their quality of life.

To fulfill its mission, the MS Society uses donations from the general public to support:

- Research and MS Clinics across the country
- Individual and family services
- Public awareness programs
- Social action activities

The MS Society spends only about 20 percent on administration and fundraising.

Keep in mind

Since the course of multiple sclerosis is unpredictable, it is no wonder that people in the early stages feel uncertain about their future. However, keep in mind that most people with MS remain symptom free for many years after diagnosis. It helps to talk about your concerns with your doctor, another health professional or to contact the MS Society of Canada.

Multiple sclerosis will affect you, but it need not control your daily activities or prevent you from getting on with your life.

How to reach the MS Society

Atlantic Division

71 Isley Avenue
Unit 12
Dartmouth NS
B3B 1L5
(902) 468-8230

Quebec Division

666 Sherbrooke Street West
Suite 1500
Montreal QC
H3A 1E7
(514) 849-7591

Ontario Division

250 Bloor Street East
Suite 1000
Toronto ON
M4W 3P9
(416) 922-6065

Manitoba Division

141 Bannatyne Avenue
Suite 400
Winnipeg MB
R3B 0R3
(204) 943-9595

Saskatchewan Division

150 Albert Street
Regina SK
S4R 2N2
(306) 522-5600

Alberta Division

10104-79th Street
Edmonton AB
T6A 3G3
(403) 463-1190

British Columbia Division

1130 West Pender St.
Suite 1600
Vancouver BC
V6E 4A4
(604) 689-3144

National Office

250 Bloor Street East
Suiten 1000
Toronto ON
M4W 3P9
(416) 922-6065
Web page:
<http://www.mssociety.ca>

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