



Knowledge Brochure Series

MS & SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

Identifying your multiple sclerosis (MS) symptoms

A chronic disease like MS can cause a number of different symptoms—and recognizing yours is the first step in developing a plan to manage them.

Some symptoms people with MS may experience include:

- Spasticity
- Bowel and bladder problems
- Sexual problems
- Heat and temperature sensitivity
- Pain
- Cognitive changes
- Depression

If you notice any symptoms you may think are associated with your MS, contact your healthcare team.

Managing spasticity

Spasticity is defined as involuntary muscle stiffness or sudden muscle contractions. This symptom varies widely between people who experience it and can be difficult to assess. Because spasticity flares up intermittently, you may not always feel its effects. Spasticity most often occurs in the legs but can appear in your arms as well.

About 80% of people with MS experience spasticity, which can range from mild discomfort to more serious pain and immobility. If you do experience spasticity, talk to your doctor about developing a treatment plan—improvement may be possible.

You can help combat spasticity by:

- Exercising
- Speaking with your doctor about potential medications
- Working with a physical or occupational therapist
- Altering your daily activities to avoid triggers like cold temperatures or poor posture
- Engaging in relaxation techniques like yoga, meditation, or massage

Managing bowel and bladder problems

Bowel and bladder problems may cause discomfort in people with MS. If you experience frequent or urgent urination, incontinence, incomplete urination, or a weak stream, you may be suffering from bladder problems. Bowel problems may include constipation or diarrhea.

Help manage bladder function by:

- Drinking water regularly
- Avoiding caffeine and alcohol
- Planning fluid intake
- Drinking cranberry juice daily
- Wearing absorbent pads to help your peace of mind

Help manage bowel function by:

- Exercising
- Scheduling a regular time to go
- Drinking 6 to 8 glasses of fluids daily
- Eating fiber
- Discussing remedies such as stool softeners or bulk-forming supplements with your doctor

Managing sexual problems

Sexual problems can be difficult to acknowledge and discuss, but it is a common symptom for many people with MS. Surveys of people with MS suggest that as many as 91% of men and 72% of women may experience sexual difficulties at some point during the course of their disease.

For men, this may manifest itself as difficulty achieving or maintaining an erection, reduced sensation, and difficulty ejaculating. Women typically report reduced sensation in the vaginal or clitoral area, increased sensitivity to pain, and vaginal dryness.

There are many effective ways to manage your sexual problems, including:

- Open and honest communication with your partner
- The use of medications or suppositories (as prescribed by your doctor)
- Exploring alternative means of sexual stimulation
- Use of water-soluble personal lubricants

Don't be afraid to bring up sensitive topics like sexual problems with your healthcare team. They can offer suggestions and prescribe treatments that may help.

Managing heat and temperature sensitivity

Changes in temperature can affect people with MS differently. Extreme hot or cold temperatures can trigger a worsening of symptoms. Even small rises in temperature (like a hot shower or too much sun) can lead to symptoms.

Help keep your temperature stable—and your symptoms at bay—by:

- Seeking out air-conditioned spaces
- Drinking plenty of fluids, especially if you are feeling hot
- Relaxing in a pool that is cooler than 85°F
- Wearing appropriate clothing for the temperature: lightweight, loose clothing for warmer weather, and sweaters, gloves, scarves, and earmuffs in chillier climates
- Checking and preparing for the climate at your destination if you are traveling or moving

Temperature-related symptoms are usually temporary and tend to disappear when you return to your normal body temperature.

Managing pain

For some patients, pain is an unfortunate symptom of MS. Pain may include neuropathic or musculoskeletal pain. Neuropathic pain comes directly from the damage to nerves in MS. Musculoskeletal pain may come from weakness, stiffness, or other mobility problems in MS.

Both types of pain can be acute or chronic. The key is to identify the type of pain and treat the source of it.

Some treatment options may include:

Neuropathic pain:

- Medication
- Acupuncture
- Meditation
- Cognitive behavioral therapy

Musculoskeletal pain:

- Medication
- Physical therapy
- Massage
- Application of cold or heat

Remember: Only take medication as prescribed by your doctor.

Managing cognitive changes

A change in cognitive function is common in MS. More than half of all people with MS can develop cognitive problems, and it may even be your first symptom. Certain functions are more likely to be affected than others such as processing information, memory, attention, concentration, visual perception, planning, and verbal fluency.

Stay sharp by keeping your mind active and challenged with:

- Puzzles or games
- Reading
- Writing in a journal or diary

Stay organized by:

- Making daily “to-do” lists
- Creating schedules and reminder notifications



Managing depression

The onset or worsening of depression is a common experience for many people with MS. Although depression is different for everyone, there are things you can do to help manage its effects. Signs of clinical depression may include sadness, irritability, loss of interest in everyday activities, and thoughts of death or suicide, among others.

Talk to your doctor about ways to help manage your depression, such as:

- Exercising
- Reaching out to your support network
- Writing down your thoughts in a notebook
- Taking medication as prescribed by your doctor

Keep track of your emotional state. If you notice prolonged or particularly strong feelings of depression, contact your doctor immediately.

Work together to manage your MS symptoms

With the right support, you can proactively manage your symptoms

While this brochure contains many tips and strategies to help manage your MS symptoms, remember that symptom management starts with an open and honest conversation with your doctor. The more your healthcare team knows, the better they can help. Together, you and your support networks can work out a plan to take control of your symptoms.

Address issues as they arise to take an active role in managing your MS symptoms.

Support is available



While there's no substitute for medical advice from your doctor, Teva **Shared Solutions**[®] Digital Services provides a variety of downloadable resources to help guide your MS journey.

The following websites provide additional MS-related information:

- National Multiple Sclerosis Society: www.nmss.org
- Multiple Sclerosis Association of America: www.mymsaa.org
- Caregiver Action Network: www.caregiveraction.org
- MS Connection: www.msconnection.org