

Contact Us Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430

## Background of MS

### Education

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a disease of the central nervous system (CNS). The CNS includes the brain, spinal cord, and the nerve that connects the eyes to the brain. The CNS functions as a pathway for impulses to travel from the brain to the extremities and all other parts of the body. These impulses carry information to and from the brain. The network of nerves throughout the body transmits information about what is happening in the body, as well as sensory information about the environment. The brain sends signals through the body with how to respond.

### Causes of MS Symptoms

MS is an autoimmune disease. A normally functioning immune system is our defense against viruses, bacteria, and other foreign pathogens. In autoimmune disease, the immune system loses the ability to recognize our own tissues as being a part of our self, and thus attacks our own tissues. In MS, the immune system attacks the insulating fatty layer on the outside of nerve cells which is called myelin. Myelin insulates the nerve cell and allows it to carry and transmit the electrical impulses of nerves. When the myelin layer is damaged or destroyed such as in MS, the normal flow of impulses through the nerves is interrupted or stopped. This interruption causes the symptoms experienced by patients with MS.

### Symptoms Associated with MS

The symptoms of MS can be many and varied depending on where in the CNS MS attacks. The number and type of symptoms experienced by MS patients will vary.

- Fatigue
- Numbness in extremities
- Movement difficulties in extremities
- Bowel and/or bladder problems
- Memory and/or attention problems
- Visual disturbances
- Mood changes

Most people with MS will have relapses (flare-ups) of symptoms. The symptoms then get better for a while before another relapse occurs. Symptoms typically tend to slowly get worse over time.

### MS Treatments

Currently there is no cure for MS. There are several drugs that are used to treat MS. These drugs work to decrease the frequency and severity of symptom relapses. The drugs also slow the progression of worsening of symptoms. This allows the patient to enjoy a more normal life for a longer period of time. Many MS drugs must be given by injection. Like all drugs, there may be side effects experienced with administration. It is important to know what to expect from your medication. Discuss your therapy with your physician, pharmacist, or nurse. They can answer all of your questions.

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## Learning About MS

### ***Staying Informed***

Living with a chronic disease presents a unique set of challenges. The more you know about MS, the better you will be able to enjoy life. Your physician is the first place to go when you have questions. MS pharmacists, nurses and other healthcare professionals are also experts who can provide you with the answers you need. These people know your condition and how you are doing.

### ***To Find More Information***

There are numerous quality sources of information readily available to you if you want to learn more about MS in general.

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society offers a wealth of information. They can be found on the internet at [www.nationalmssociety.org](http://www.nationalmssociety.org). You can learn more about living with MS on their site. The society has information about current MS treatments. Their website also provides the latest news on MS research and information on topics of interest to MS patients.

### ***MS Chapters Near You***

The National MS Society also has local chapters in cities and towns across America. Many chapters have support groups and family programs. You can use their website to locate a chapter in your area.

### ***Learning About Your Medication***

The website of the manufacturer of the medication you take is a good source to learn more about your therapy. Some companies offer an online question and answer service that can answer specific questions about your medicines, side effects, or injections.

### ***Sources You Can Trust***

Because you have a disease with no known cure, you may be tempted to grasp at any ray of hope that promises to make you better. When searching for information, keep in mind that not everything you read or hear is correct. If you find a remedy claiming to cure MS, do not be fooled.

A healthy lifestyle built around a good diet, exercise, and preventative healthcare will help you live life to the fullest despite MS.

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