

Contact Us Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430

## Sensory Symptoms

### Overview

Sensory symptoms include numbness, tingling, burning, itching, and increased sensitivity to touch. 20 to 50 percent of patients with Multiple Sclerosis will experience sensory symptoms at some point, and sensory symptoms are often encountered early in the course of MS. This sheet will provide information about some common sensory symptoms and how to manage them.

### Numbness

Numbness happens because damaged nerves do not transmit information correctly to the brain. This causes sensations from the body to be either reduced or totally eliminated. Numbness usually goes away by itself, so for many patients it is mostly annoying. Some types of numbness are more severe, however. If a person's face is numb, they must be careful not to bite their lips or tongue while chewing. Also, numbness of the limbs can cause impaired proprioception, meaning that the brain has trouble sensing the position of a limb. This can lead to trouble with balance or coordination. Medications like gabapentin (Neurontin), pregabalin (Lyrica), amitriptyline (Elavil), venlafaxine (Effexor), and duloxetine (Cymbalta) may help MS patients manage numbness.

### Tingling/Burning

Tingling or burning sensations may also be caused by damage to nerve cells. In severe cases, these symptoms sometimes cause uncontrollable leg movements. This condition is known as Restless Leg Syndrome, or RLS. Medications such as Gabapentin, Mirapex, and Requip may help patients with MS manage RLS. Also, lifestyle changes may be helpful in managing RLS. These changes include avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine (which can worsen RLS), practicing good sleep habits, and stretching, warming, or massaging the affected leg to relieve RLS symptoms. For more information about managing RLS, please contact your Patient Care Coordinator.

### Weakness

Weakness has two main causes. For some patients, weakness is brought about by a different MS symptom, like fatigue or spasticity. For other patients, weakness is caused by actual damage to nerve cells, which means that muscle strength is still present, but signals from the brain are not getting through. Treating fatigue or spasticity may help reduce weakness that is due to these causes. Also, a class of medicines called aminopyridines may benefit patients who experience weakness due to actual nerve damage. Ask your Patient Care Coordinator for more information about dealing with weakness caused by MS.

### Weakness

- Speak with your doctor about medications for managing sensory symptoms.
- Get gentle massages focusing on the areas causing the most discomfort.
- Consider using hot or cold compresses to soothe affected areas.
- Speak with a physical therapist about the benefits of exercise in patients with MS.
- Contact Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy or your doctor for more tips on managing sensory symptoms.

For questions or concerns regarding any of the above statements or recommendations, please feel free to contact Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430.