



Managing Life with Multiple Sclerosis

A resource for patients, families and caregivers

AcariaHealth[™]
Specialty Pharmacy

What is Multiple Sclerosis?

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a disease of the central nervous system (CNS). The CNS is made up of the brain, spinal cord and optic nerves. MS causes a person's immune system to attack the protective coating of nerves.

Inside the CNS, the immune system causes inflammation that damages the fatty substance (myelin) that surrounds and insulates nerve fibers. The immune system can also damage nerve fibers and cells that make myelin. Below are some facts about MS:

- Damaged or destroyed myelin or nerve fibers lead to altered or stopped messages within the CNS.
- Damage to CNS areas can produce several neurological symptoms that differ in type and severity.
- Multiple damaged areas that make scar tissue gave multiple sclerosis its name.
- The cause of MS is not known. It may involve genetic vulnerability. It may also involve abnormalities in the immune system and environmental factors that join to trigger the disease.



Types of MS

There are four basic types of MS based on how the symptoms present. There is no way to predict how MS will progress.

CLINICALLY ISOLATED SYNDROME: A first episode of neurologic symptoms caused by inflammation and damage in the CNS. People who experience clinically isolated syndrome may go on to have MS.

RELAPSING-REMITTING MS: This type has clear relapses and remission times. Relapses are also called attacks or exacerbations that last from days to weeks and then decrease. Remissions are times of full or partial recovery and no disease progression between attacks. About 85 percent of people begin with this multiple sclerosis.

PRIMARY PROGRESSIVE MS: This type begins with symptoms that do not diminish and may even worsen. Disability may also grow with few or no relapses or remissions. About 15 percent of people have this course.

SECONDARY PROGRESSIVE MS: People with this type started with the relapsing-remitting type. Over time, their condition progresses, and they develop the secondary progressive type of MS. People with secondary progressive MS may or may not have relapses and new lesions on MRI.

What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms of MS can be random and symptoms can shift. No two MS patients will have the same symptoms and symptoms can vary and change with time. Patients may experience one of the symptoms, while others may experience multiple symptoms.

- > MS Hug (Dysesthesia)
- > Fatigue
- > Walking difficulties
- > Spasticity
- > Vision problems
- > Bladder / bowel problems
- > Cognitive changes
- > Depression
- > Numbness or tingling
- > Weakness
- > Vertigo and dizziness
- > Sexual problems
- > Pain and itching
- > Emotional changes



We do more than just fill a prescription. We empower patients and their families to navigate the medical and emotional aspects of multiple sclerosis.

Treatment of Multiple Sclerosis

Although no cure for MS exists, medicines and lifestyle changes can help manage the disease. Each person's body and disease responds differently. Your doctor can help you find the best choice for you. Medications for treating MS include disease modifying drugs and symptom treatments.

Disease-modifying Drugs

Disease-modifying drugs work by limiting the immune system. This prevents it from attacking the myelin that surrounds the nerves. These medicines slow down MS progression and prevent flare-ups. Taking these medications does not broadly improve day to day symptoms.

There are different ways these drugs can be taken including, by mouth, injected and infused. Each medication has unique features and side effects to consider. Talk to your doctor about which treatment best meets your needs.

Symptom Treatments

Symptom treatments do not change MS progression but they help to make symptoms more manageable. Different drugs may address symptoms including walking speed, muscles stiffness and pain, fatigue, depression, and bladder problems. These medications are often part of the full treatment plan developed by your doctor.

Importance of Nutrition

Most MS experts agree that a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of any MS treatment plan. Positive changes you make towards more healthy habits will likely help overall health and well-being. Taking vitamin D may also help MS patients.

MS and Pregnancy

MS does not affect your ability to become pregnant or cause harm to your baby. Most pregnant women with MS feel fine and have no new MS activity during pregnancy. However, there is an increased risk of relapse after delivery.

Heat and Temperature Sensitivity

People with MS can have a brief worsening of their symptoms when the weather is hot or humid, or when running a fever. These brief changes can result from a minor rise in core body temperature. Higher temperatures further weaken the ability of a damaged nerve to conduct electrical impulses.

Sunbathing, exercise, and taking hot showers or baths can have the same result. Heat only temporarily worsens symptoms. It does not cause more disease activity. The symptoms improve after you cool down.

Strategies for easing the effects of heat and humidity:

- > Stay inside
- > Wear light, loose, breathable clothing
- > Enjoy cold drinks and popsicles
- > Exercise in a cool pool (<85 degrees) or a cool environment. If exercising outside, pick cooler times of the day, usually early morning or evening
- > Take cool baths or showers

Importance of Exercise


Exercise can help give you energy and a mental boost. Talk to your doctor about the right kind of exercise and pay attention to how you feel while exercising. Rest or stop if you get tired.

Having fun while being active is key to staying involved. If you feel uneasy or unable to play on a sports team, think about an exercise program.

Exercise programs may include treadmills, stationary bikes, and swimming. Before starting any program, talk with your doctor. They can make sure that your heart and lungs can handle the exercise.

Exercise and physical activity are helpful in managing many MS symptoms. Aerobic exercise programs for people living with MS have shown benefits with:

- > Cardiovascular fitness
- > Strength
- > Bladder and bowel function
- > Fatigue
- > Mood
- > Cognitive function
- > Bone density
- > Flexibility

A family of four is hiking through a field of tall, dry grass. The father, wearing a yellow jacket and khaki shorts, has his arm around the shoulder of a young boy in a green jacket. The mother, wearing a red jacket and khaki pants, is walking to the right with a large backpack. A young girl in a blue jacket and jeans is walking in the middle. All are smiling and appear to be enjoying their hike. The background is a blurred forest with green and autumn-colored trees.

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Exercise programs should fit your interests and abilities. You may need to adjust your routine over time. Seek a physical therapist or fitness professional with knowledge about MS for help with a specific exercise program.

Talking about MS

Talking about MS is personal. For some, it is freeing to discuss. For others, talking about it is more challenging. If your diagnosis is new and you are still learning about MS, it might be hard to tell others. It is understandable that others may have questions for you.

It can be helpful to take time for yourself to process your own feelings. This can allow you the time you need to feel comfortable discussing your MS.

Factors to consider when talking about MS with others:

- > Telling people who are close to you can benefit both of you. The support of people closest to you can be very helpful. Start with those who interact with you on a daily basis.
- > If you decide to tell someone, think about what their response might be. This helps you to feel more prepared. Even by preparing, you might get surprising reactions. Be prepared to give the person time to process their own feelings.
- > Parents should consider a child's age and ability to understand.
- > It is best for your children to hear this kind of information from you.
- > Children are very aware of things going on around them. They may sense changes in their parent's physical and emotional state. If you choose not to discuss your condition with them, they may become confused.

AcariaHealth's Focus on Supporting Multiple Sclerosis Patients

Our Multiple Sclerosis Management Program is designed to meet the needs of people living with Multiple Sclerosis. We do more than just fill a prescription. We empower patients and their families to navigate the medical and emotional aspects of Multiple Sclerosis. We understand that Multiple Sclerosis affects a person emotionally and physically. We care about our patients' welfare and provide individualized support and services. These are designed to manage treatment, empowering patients to be healthy, active and thrive.

Experience and Expertise

Our team of experts provides educational resources, helps patients to navigate their insurance benefits and provides information on financial assistance programs. We take pride in the timely coordination and follow-up of these services, which are key to successful treatment. We work with your Neurologist to speed up the referral process and to provide the highest standard of care.

24/7 Pharmacist Availability

We provide access to a pharmacist **24 hours a day**, seven days a week through our on-call team. For patient support, our call centers are open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. ET.

Injection Support

Our teams of care coordinators, nurses and pharmacists are specially trained to manage a patient's journey, including education. The team will conduct a baseline assessment. If needed, they train patients in self administration. This occurs when starting the drug and before each refill. We aid patients with enrollment into programs that provide in-home injection training by a Registered Nurse (RN).

Copay Assistance for MS Patients

When receiving a new referral for MS medication, AcariaHealth staff will check for copay assistance for our patients. Our team has experience working with manufacturers, foundations and funded assistance programs. We also support patients in the enrollment process by completing forms on their behalf.

Pharmacy Services

- > Free home delivery of your medication
- > Access to many medications in oral, injectable, IV and generic formulations
- > Contact a pharmacist anytime, 24/7
- > Support available in many languages
- > Coordinate nursing services
- > Immediate alerts of drug recalls
- > Medication list checks to lower risk of drug interactions

Patient Support

- > Refill reminders
- > Training to make sure patients are comfortable giving their own injections
- > Check-ins to make sure patients continue taking medication when they should and talk about any new health concerns
- > Partner with non-profits to share up-to-date information about Multiple Sclerosis resources and events all over the country
- > Home infusion services from a certified Infusion RN through Specialty Therapeutic Care protects immune compromised

- > Work with drug makers to find programs for patients that qualify for lower cost or free drugs


Reimbursement Services

- > Full insurance benefit investigation
- > Support with services to help make insurance approvals faster and easier
- > Help eligible patients access programs that can lower medication cost



Transforming Lives With Compassionate Care



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Multiple Sclerosis Helpful Resources

For more information on assistance programs and reimbursement issues, patients and caregivers are encouraged to check out the organizations listed below:

[National MS Society](#)

[Multiple Sclerosis Association of America](#)

Insurance and Premium Assistance

[Healthcare.gov](#)

[Patient Access Network](#)



ahrx.co/MS-forms