



Multiple Sclerosis

Fact:

There is currently no known cause or cure for MS.

Fiction:

It's a myth that MS is always totally debilitating.

Prevention:

MS cannot currently be prevented.

Treatment:

Therapy and medication can help manage MS symptoms.

MS progressively attacks nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, creating disabling symptoms. The disease remains a mystery in many ways.

Understanding MS

The nerve cells of the brain and spinal cord have an insulating sheath made of fatty myelin, which speeds the passage of nerve impulses. MS inflames or damages this sheath, disrupting impulses and leaving areas of scarring (sclerosis).

Scientists now believe that MS is an autoimmune disease, in which defensive cells of the body's immune system attack the nerve sheaths.

The types of MS are based on the patterns the disease takes:

- In relapsing remitting MS, relapses are followed by remissions, with the condition fairly stable in between
- In primary progressive MS, the condition worsens gradually and continuously
- In secondary progressive MS, someone who originally had relapsing remitting MS begins to suffer gradual deterioration, with or without relapses

Who Has MS?

MS strikes more than 1 million young adults worldwide—50% more women than men. It is five times more common in temperate climates than the tropics. Close relatives of someone with MS are five times more likely to develop it.*

Symptoms of MS

MS symptoms usually come and go through periods of relapses (where symptoms suddenly get worse) or remission (when symptoms improve).

Symptoms depend on the parts of the brain or spinal cord affected and include:*

- Sudden loss of vision, or blurred or double vision
- Slurred speech
- Vertigo, clumsiness and loss of coordination
- Trembling of a hand or muscle weakness
- Numbness, weakness or pain in face
- Loss of bladder control or inability to empty the bladder

- Feeling of tingling, numbness or tightening in arms, legs or elsewhere
- Seizures

When It's an Emergency

Call your doctor immediately if you have symptoms of MS.

Prevention and Treatment

There is currently no way to prevent MS.

To diagnose MS, doctors look for signs of nerve damage through a brain or spinal cord scan, a spinal tap, and a detailed eye exam.

MS currently has no cure. However, medications can modify the immune system to suppress the disease's progression, and can improve symptoms such as:

- Exhaustion
- Seizures and other neurological problems
- Muscle spasms
- Bladder function
- Depression

* IntelliHealth

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