

Coping with the diagnosis

Being diagnosed with MS can be a devastating event for both the patient and their family. The unpredictable nature of the course of the disease makes it difficult to adjust psychologically to the disease and plan for the future. The fact that there is no cure can be hard to accept. However, many people remain independent for 20 years and longer after diagnosis and only a small proportion go on to severe disability.

Point to help you to cope

- ? Do not expect to take in a lot of information about MS at your first consultation
- ? Prepare a list of questions for your doctor at your next consultation and keep asking until you get an answer you understand
- ? Realise that you may go through the equivalent of a grieving process that can include shock, anger, depression and denial
- ? Try to adopt a balanced attitude towards your condition in neither over-accepting MS or denying it, that is:
 - accepting that there are new limits but not giving in
 - adapting to new ways of life with possibly new roles at home and work
 - living and contributing as much as possible
 - creating a new meaning and purpose to your life

Reference text

Gibson J, Frank A. Supporting individuals with disabling multiple sclerosis. J Roy Soc Med 2002; 95: 580-586.