

Frequently Asked Questions

What can I do?

MS is a disease that has to be lived with on a daily basis for the rest of your life. If you have little or no physical disability, your lifestyle and that of your family may not change at all. Nevertheless, the knowledge of the disease and its potential implications can weigh very heavily on the individual with the disease and the surrounding family. It all really depends upon the symptoms you are experiencing and how you feel. Symptoms can be continually present or pronounced at different times. The severity of the symptoms often dictate to what extent MS will affect your life.

Many people with MS say they have to plan ahead more than they were used to doing in the past and that they have to change some of their activities and schedules. If fatigue is a problem, for example, several short rest periods each day may allow you to continue your usual routine, but at a slightly slower pace.

Exercise

Physiotherapy and regular exercise can be helpful in keeping as fit as possible. You and your doctor will probably want to discuss what therapy or exercise programme would be of benefit. It might involve having physiotherapy on a fairly regular basis or doing specific exercises at home. Others have found activities such as swimming, yoga and horseback riding to be helpful. Any exercise that you enjoy and are able to do comfortably will be beneficial. Besides maintaining good muscle tone, exercise can be a great way to release tension and to relax. Your national or local MS society may offer recreation or exercise programmes that would be helpful, or recommend facilities or health personnel to provide these activities.

Diet

Over the years, a number of diets for MS have been proposed, which is probably only natural for a disease with no known cause or cure. Whilst some of the suggested diets contradict each other, it does make sense to have a nutritionally balanced diet that will ensure you have all the required vitamins and minerals. Some people find that a diet low in animal fats and high in polyunsaturated fats is helpful to them. It would be wise to discuss any changes in your own diet with your physician or dietician.

Job planning

Because MS might bring about some physical and cognitive disability over time, it makes sense to realistically evaluate your current job in the light of these possible changes. If your job is very physically demanding, you might want to consider alternative jobs or retraining to reduce the physical nature of your occupation. In a more sedentary job, your physical limitations may not impact so greatly and you might be able to remain at work for many more years. Career counselling and vocational training may be available in your country.

Family changes

One of the more difficult problems for the married couple to cope with after a diagnosis of MS is the possible change in their roles. The possibilities for the future should be looked at together. A family with two incomes may have to learn to cope on one. One of the partners may have to take on additional responsibilities for running the home and caring for the children. Full and open discussions are the key to dealing with these important changes successfully.