

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

In the Clinic
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What is multiple sclerosis (MS)?

- A chronic disease that affects the central nervous system (brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves).
- MS causes the immune system to attack the protective covering that surrounds nerve cells (called the myelin sheath).
- When myelin is damaged or destroyed, nerves can't function properly to deliver signals back and forth from the brain to different parts of the body.

What are the symptoms?

- Blurred vision or other vision problems.
- Loss of balance and poor coordination.
- Tremors, numbness, or slurred speech.
- Partial or complete paralysis.
- Fatigue and problems with memory and concentration.
- Symptoms vary depending on the area of the body where the myelin sheath is damaged.
- Symptoms may be permanent, or they may come and go.

How is it diagnosed?

- Your doctor will perform a careful examination and ask you about your medical history.
- No single test is available to prove or rule out MS.
- Blood tests may show signs of other illnesses that cause symptoms similar to MS.
- Neurologic tests that check eye movements, speech, muscles, balance, reflexes, and sensation can show how well your nervous system is working.
- Spinal fluid from a spinal tap may show signs of MS or rule out infection or other possible conditions.
- Magnetic resonance imaging takes a detailed picture of your brain and spinal cord, where lesions that suggest MS may be present.

How is it treated?

- Your doctor may prescribe medicine to relieve specific symptoms, such as pain, muscle stiffness and spasms, fatigue, and bladder problems.



- Steroids, such as prednisone, can help reduce nerve inflammation during flare-ups.
- Disease-modifying drugs, such as interferons or glatiramer acetates, can slow disease progression.
- Physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy can also help reduce symptoms.
- Lifestyle changes, including a healthy diet, being physically active, and getting enough sleep, may also be beneficial.

For More Information

www.nationalmssociety.org/about-multiple-sclerosis/newly-diagnosed/index.aspx

Information and resources for patients with newly diagnosed MS from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

www.nationalmssociety.org/about-multiple-sclerosis/what-we-know-about-ms/treatments/index.aspx

www.nationalmssociety.org/about-multiple-sclerosis/what-we-know-about-ms/treatments/medications/plasmapheresis-plasma-exchange/index.aspx

www.nationalmssociety.org/about-multiple-sclerosis/what-we-know-about-ms/treatments/rehabilitation/index.aspx

Information on the role of different treatments and rehabilitation in managing MS.

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