WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

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

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