

What you can do to manage symptoms of multiple sclerosis

July 18 2022, by Jagannadha Avasarala



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Multiple sclerosis (MS), a chronic neurological disease of the brain and spinal cord, is the most common neurologic disease occurring in young people. In fact, this disease impacts approximately a quarter of a million Americans.

The cause of MS is unknown. However, experts do know that something triggers the immune system to attack the brain and [spinal cord](#). The [immune system](#) damages myelin, or the insulating layer around nerves, which disrupts signals to and from the brain. Because of this, people who have MS can be severely impacted in their daily lives.

Symptoms of MS can either be acute or chronic and can vary from person to person. It is important to be aware of the varying symptoms of MS. Symptoms of MS may include:

- Ambulation problems such as fatigue or weakness when walking, speaking or swallowing
- Tingling or numbness in the limbs
- Bladder and bowel dysfunction
- Cognitive dysfunction
- Mood changes or depression
- Sexual dysfunction
- Tremors or spasms
- Vertigo
- Visual impairment
- In severe cases, people with MS can experience blindness and/or paralysis

There is no known cure of MS. Therefore, symptom management is an essential component to leading a healthy life with this disease. Your doctor may choose to treat your MS with steroid treatments, blood

transfusions or [physical therapy](#) depending on the severity of your symptoms.

However, on top of treatments from your doctor, there are many things you can do to help too. Here are some [lifestyle changes](#) you can make to help manage MS symptoms from home:

- Get adequate amounts of quality rest. People with MS are more likely to experience sleep disturbances than the rest of the population. To improve quality of sleep, try clearing your mind before bed, practicing relaxation techniques, removing [electronic devices](#) from the bedroom and regulate your sleep schedule.
- Exercise. If you are able, regular exercise can help increase your strength, muscle tone, balance and coordination. Swimming is a great option for those who are bothered by heat.
- Cool yourself down. If your body temperature rises, MS symptoms can worsen. Avoiding exposure to heat by wearing cooling clothing can be helpful.
- Eat a [balanced diet](#). A cardiac diet may be recommended, and ensure you are getting plenty of fiber and water to help with potential MS induced bowel troubles.
- Relieve stress. When you are experiencing stress, your MS symptoms can worsen. Yoga, tai chi, massage, deep breathing or meditation may all help relieve stress.

Most importantly, if you are struggling with your diagnosis or symptoms, it is important to reach out to your doctor for additional resources on treating MS.

Provided by University of Kentucky

Citation: What you can do to manage symptoms of multiple sclerosis (2022, July 18) retrieved 9

May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-07-symptoms-multiple-sclerosis.html>

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