

1,000,000

Almost 1 million people in the United States have multiple sclerosis, and there a number of resources available to everyone!¹

Get the Facts on Multiple Sclerosis Relapse



Multiple sclerosis is an auto-immune disease. In autoimmune diseases, the immune system attacks healthy tissues. In multiple sclerosis, the immune system mistakenly attacks myelin (substance making up the covering around nerve fibers) in the brain and spinal cord.²

When old symptoms that have been stable for over 30 days worsen or new symptoms lasting over 24 hours appear, this may be a relapse (also known as an exacerbation, attack, or flare-up). These symptoms are present without any signs of fever or infection.³ Relapses may last from a few days to several weeks or months.⁴

Signs and Symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis Relapse

Signs and symptoms of multiple sclerosis relapse can vary for each person. They can also vary from relapse to relapse. Some people may experience one symptom during a relapse and others may experience two or more symptoms at one time.⁴

Listed below are some common signs and symptoms individuals report:³



FATIGUE



NUMBNESS/
TINGLING



WALKING AND
BALANCE
ISSUES



MUSCLE
WEAKNESS



MEMORY LOSS,
DIFFICULTY
CONCENTRATING,
BRAIN FOG



MUSCLE
SPASMS



PAIN



LOSS OF
COORDINATION



DEPRESSION



VISION
PROBLEMS



SENSITIVITY
TO HEAT

“ I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship. *Louisa May Alcott* ”



References: 1. Multiple Sclerosis FAQs. From National Multiple Sclerosis Society website. <https://www.nationalmssociety.org/What-is-MS/MS-FAQ-s#question-How-many-people-have-MS>. Accessed September 27, 2020. 2. Multiple Sclerosis: Hope Through Research. NIH website. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/patient-caregiver-education/hope-through-research/multiple-sclerosis-hope-through-research>. Accessed September 27, 2020. 3. Nazareth, TA, Rava, AR, Polyakov, JL, et al. Relapse prevalence, symptoms, and healthcare engagement: patient insights from the Multiple Sclerosis in America 2017 survey. *Multiple Sclerosis and Related Disorders*. 2018;26:219-234. 4. Galea, I, Ward-Abel, N, Heesen, C. Relapse in multiple sclerosis. *BMJ*. 2015; 350:h1765 doi: 10.1136/bmj.h1765.



Treating Multiple Sclerosis Relapse

Some people experiencing a multiple sclerosis relapse may not require treatment. Doctor(s) may prescribe treatment if the symptoms of the relapse affect a person's overall ability to function.⁵

Treatment for multiple sclerosis relapse is different for every person. Individuals should talk to their doctor(s) to determine which treatment(s) may be right for them!

Goals of Multiple Sclerosis Relapse Treatment

It is important to understand the goals of your individualized multiple sclerosis relapse treatment plan. Identifying and keeping track of treatment goals is a key first step. Individuals should discuss their treatment goals with their doctor. Some multiple sclerosis relapse treatment goals may include:²

- Reducing inflammation
- Ending the relapse more quickly

Self-Care and Multiple Sclerosis

Coping with multiple sclerosis can be overwhelming at times. Sometimes it can make the individual feel sad, angry, or isolated. Practicing proper self-care can help and is important for both your mental and physical well-being. Some ideas for self-care may include:⁶

- ◆ Staying connected with friends/family
- ◆ Engaging in activities you enjoy
- ◆ Seeking humorous and upbeat entertainment
- ◆ Setting aside leisure time (eg, reading a book, gardening, listening to a podcast)
- ◆ Investing in a hobby
- ◆ Seeking quiet through meditation and/or prayer
- ◆ Eating healthy meals
- ◆ Working with your healthcare provider to develop an exercise program that's right for you



Keep your face toward the sunshine – and shadows will fall behind you.

Walt Whitman

More Information, Support, and Educational Resources

This list includes helpful websites and organizations that provide information about multiple sclerosis, support groups, and other multiple sclerosis resources!

- ◆ **National Multiple Sclerosis Society**
www.nationalMSSociety.org
- ◆ **Multiple Sclerosis Foundation**
www.msfocus.org
- ◆ **Can Do Multiple Sclerosis**
www.cando-ms.org
- ◆ **Multiple Sclerosis Association of America**
www.mymssa.org
- ◆ **National Alliance for Caregiving**
www.caregiving.org



References: 5. Morrow, S. When to treat MS relapse. *Cross Curr Mult Scler*. 2009;(suppl): 65-66. 6. Self-Care for Autoimmune Disease Patients. American Autoimmune website. <https://www.aarda.org/self-care>. Published September, 2018. Accessed March 5, 2020.

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