

To Disclose or Not Disclose Your MS to Your Employer, That Is the Question



We know that multiple sclerosis is unpredictable. We know that it is complex. As such, MS can have varying effects on a person’s ability to do several tasks, among them, work.

While people with MS can work as long as they can and want, the decision of continuing to work following an MS diagnosis should not be made lightly. Unfortunately, we see people make impulsive or premature decisions without weighing their options and taking potential consequences into account. **Consider doing the following before you leave the workplace or stop work altogether:**

- Learn your legal rights (disclosure and reasonable accommodations)
- Take a temporary leave to recuperate or change careers
- Cut back on your work hours
- Change positions with your current employer
- Consider the financial impact
- Analyze the benefits connected to your employment

After deciding whether to remain in the workforce, the next decision people with MS can face is whether to disclose their diagnosis to their employer or potential employer. I discussed this subject during a recent episode of [Ask an MS Expert](#).

While this can be a complicated matter, disclosing a diagnosis isn’t required. However, in

order to receive needed accommodation (a modification to the work environment or the way an essential job function is performed), [**u a person with MS can start by disclosing they have a medical condition or neurological condition**](#). If the employer needs additional information to show that the person's disability qualifies under the ADA and requires accommodation, they can ask for relevant information.

With MS, a person's situation can change over time. Symptoms may come and go, and an accommodation at work may be necessary down the road. We do not want people struggling to do their job to put it job in jeopardy by not disclosing and requesting an accommodation. If you need an accommodation, simply start by telling your employer you need a work adjustment related to a medical condition.

Among the types of workplace accommodations that may benefit people with MS:

- A flexible work schedule
- An office close to the bathroom
- More time to accomplish tasks
- The option to work from home
- Assistive technology
- An ergonomic workstation

Another question we get frequently is how to handle disclosing MS during a job interview. At the end of the day, if you need an accommodation to participate in an interview, you will need to disclose your MS to receive that accommodation. If you do not need an accommodation during an interview, you really want to focus on your skills and why you're the best person for the job.

Deciding to disclose an MS diagnosis can generate a great deal of fear and worry in a person. Those feelings are very common, but the [**Americans with Disabilities Act**](#) can provide some comfort. The ADA is designed to prevent discrimination, so employers cannot retaliate against an employee after they disclose their diagnosis.

No two situations are the same, so we encourage people to carefully plan and think about their decision to disclose and the reasons for telling certain people.

If you are faced with deciding whether to disclose your MS diagnosis, we recommend you:

- Think about your situation and ask yourself why you're considering whether to disclose.
- Weigh out the pros and cons, and come up with a plan of action.
- Write a disclosure script and plan the approach you will use when talking to your employer.

Resources for you

The [employment section](#) of the Society website offers numerous tools, from a [disclosure worksheet](#) to [reasonable accommodations](#) in the workplace. You can also speak with a member of the Benefits and Employment team by calling 1-800-344-4867.