

MS symptoms from A to Z



A list of common issues and ways to manage them

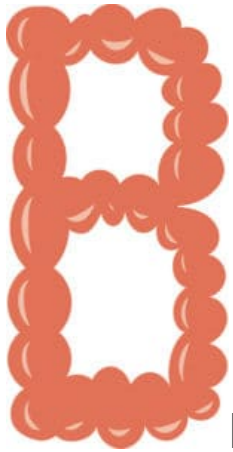
The symptoms of multiple sclerosis are as varied as those who live with the disease. No two people are the same, and a single person's symptoms can fluctuate from day to day and month to month.

Explore this list of common MS symptoms from A to Z as well as some resources to help you manage them.



Anxiety

Many people living with MS experience anxious and depressive thoughts because of their diagnosis. Learn how cognitive behavior therapy can help you manage the pain, fatigue and emotional challenges of MS at ntlms.org/a.



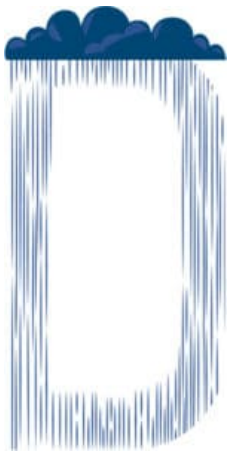
Bowel problems

Loss of bowel control, constipation and diarrhea are common MS concerns that can cause discomfort and embarrassment. See tips about managing bowel problems at ntlms.org/b.



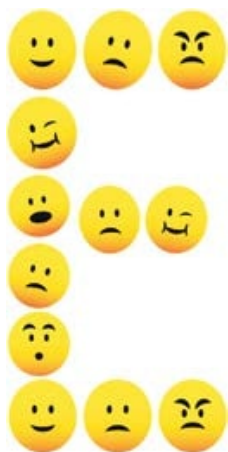
Cognitive changes

More than 50% of people with MS experience a variety of changes in high-level brain functions including difficulty remembering, learning new information, organizing, problem solving, focusing and maintaining attention. Learn how to identify cognitive changes and what you can do about them at [ntlms.org/c](https://www.nationalmssociety.org/c).



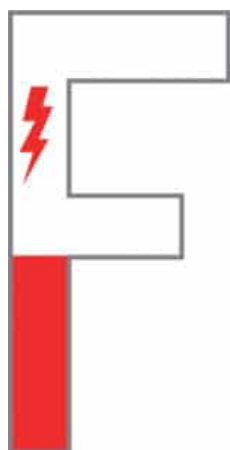
Depression

One out of two people living with MS is affected by depression. Depression symptoms can vary from low mood on some days to severe depression that lasts months. Read how people living with MS learn to live with this hidden symptom at [ntlms.org/d](https://www.nationalmssociety.org/d).



Emotional changes

The stresses of living with MS, coupled with neurologic and immune changes, can lead to considerable emotional challenges, including mood swings, irritability and episodes of uncontrollable laughing or crying. Watch a video about how to manage emotional changes at ntlms.org/e.



Fatigue

About 80% of people with MS experience fatigue, which can interfere with their physical, mental, social and/or emotional functioning. Learn more about this fluctuating symptom and how to manage it at ntlms.org/f.



Gait difficulties

Several factors including muscle weakness, spasticity, loss of balance, vertigo, fatigue, and not knowing where your body is in space, can affect gait (walking) difficulties and increase the risk of falls. Learn about difficulties walking as well as treatment and self-management strategies at ntlms.org/g.



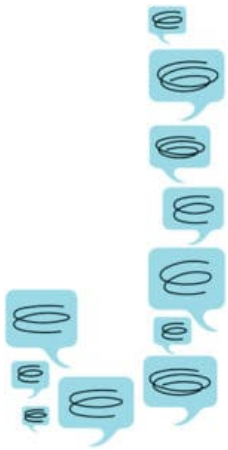
Heat Sensitivity

Some 60–80% of people living with MS experience worsening of their symptoms when they get overheated from exercise, hot showers, or just a hot, humid day. Read about heat and temperature sensitivity and how to ease its effects at ntlms.org/h.



Impaired swallowing

Nearly 40% of people with MS have trouble swallowing (dysphagia) because of muscle spasms, weakness, decreased sensation and decreased muscle coordination. Learn why it can be hard to swallow and how to make it easier at [ntlms.org/i](https://www.natlms.org/i).



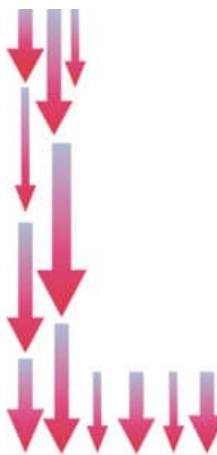
Jarred speech

Some 25–40% of people with MS develop speech problems, including slurring (dysarthria) and low volume (dysphonia), particularly later in the disease and when extremely fatigued. Learn how to overcome these and other communication challenges, including stuttering and nasal speech at [ntlms.org/j](https://www.natlms.org/j).



Kissing issues

...or more than just kissing. As many as 75% of people living with MS experience sexual problems that stem from nerve damage, fatigue and spasticity, as well as from psychological factors relating to self-esteem and mood changes. Watch a video about how MS can affect sexual feelings and functions as well as ways to have more fulfilling intimate relationships at ntlms.org/k.



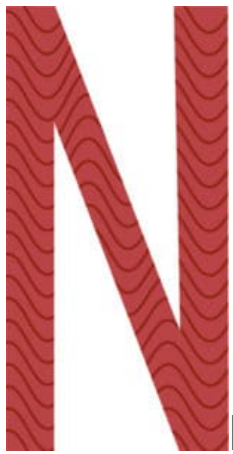
Less common symptoms

Explore less common symptoms of MS — such as hearing loss, breathing problems, tremors, and seizures — what causes them and which treatments can help at ntlms.org/L.



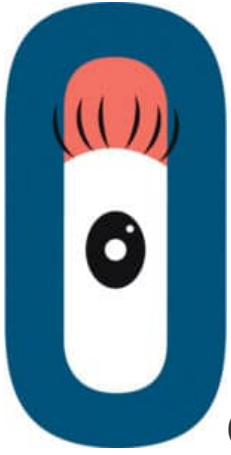
MS hug (dysesthesia)

Often a first symptom of MS or a relapse, an MS hug is a squeezing sensation around the torso that feels like a blood pressure cuff when it tightens. Learn relaxation techniques and other things you can do to lessen this strange sensation at [ntlms.org/m](https://www.natlms.org/m).



Numbness or tingling

Numbness or tingling in the face, body or extremities is a common early symptom experienced by those eventually diagnosed with MS. Learn more about numbness and watch a video about how to manage it at [ntlms.org/n](https://www.natlms.org/n).



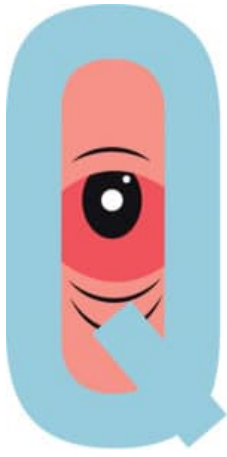
Optic neuritis

As one of the most common vision problems associated with MS, optic neuritis is often a temporary yet frightening symptom that can result in blurry vision, loss of color vision and eye pain. Learn more about the three most common vision problems and ways to cope at [ntlms.org/o](https://www.natlms.org/o).



Pain

Up to 80% of people living with MS will experience some type of pain — neuropathic (from nerve damage) or musculoskeletal (from weakness, stiffness or other mobility problems) — during the course of their illness. Find pain management tools and treatment options in a video at [ntlms.org/p](https://www.natlms.org/p).



Quality of sleep

Sleep disturbances—including reduced sleep quality, too much sleep, excessive tiredness, sleep-related breathing problems such as sleep apnea, restless legs/body syndrome and more — are common in MS. Watch a video for treatment and management strategies to help you get a restful night's sleep at ntlms.org/q.



Restless legs

Nearly one quarter of people with MS involved in a new study experienced restless legs syndrome, compared with less than 4% in people without the disease. Restless legs syndrome causes an urgent need to move the legs due to discomfort. Read about research on this symptom at ntlms.org/r.



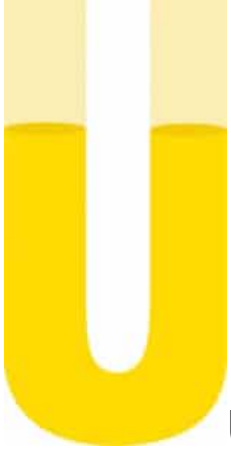
Spasticity

Approximately 80% of people living with MS experience spasticity, stiffness and/or involuntary muscle spasms — caused by damage to the nerves that control muscle impulses. Explore ways to control spasticity at [ntlms.org/s](https://www.natlms.org/s).



Taste changes

One-fourth of people living with MS experience a diminished sense of taste. Learn what causes lost-taste sensation and how to cope at [ntlms.org/t](https://www.natlms.org/t).



Urinary problems

Bladder dysfunction occurs in at least 80% of people with MS and can include incontinence and other problems. Watch a video to get tips for managing bladder symptoms and regaining control at [ntlms.org/u](https://www.natlms.org/u).



Vertigo and dizziness

Feeling off balance or lightheaded or having the sensation that your surroundings are spinning is a common symptom of MS that can limit activities. Explore ways to cope with dizziness at [ntlms.org/v](https://www.natlms.org/v).



Weakness

Weakness, which can occur in any part of the body, is caused by the deconditioning of muscles from lack of use or damage to nerve fibers in the spinal cord and brain. Read how assistive devices can help people living with MS stay on the move at ntlms.org/w.



MS symptoms are variable and unpredictable. One person might experience only one or two symptoms while another person may experience X, Y and Z. Symptoms tend to worsen with age, but there also are a variety of ways to help people live well with MS at all ages and stages of the disease. Learn how at:

ntlms.org/x

ntlms.org/y

ntlms.org/z