

MS Symptoms from A to Z



The symptoms of MS are as varied as those who live with the disease. No two people are the same and a single person's symptoms can fluctuate over time.

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

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 the emotional challenges of MS.

Bladder and Bowel Problems

Bladder dysfunction, which occurs in at least 80% of people with MS, loss of bowel control and constipation is a particular concern among people with MS. Watch the video below to hear tips for managing bowel and bladder symptoms and what you can do to regain control.

Communication Challenges

Whether it's having difficulty thinking of the correct word or becoming breathless during social conversations, communication challenges can be frustrating and affect self-confidence, relationships, parenting and safety. Learn to identify communication challenges and why it's important to [speak up](#).

Depression

One out of every two people living with MS is affected by depression. Learn how one man is learning to live with this [hidden symptom](#).

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. Read [Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde: MS and Mood Swings](#) to hear how one woman lives with these changing emotions.

Fatigue

About 80% of people with MS experience fatigue which interferes with their ability to function physically, mentally, socially and/or emotionally. Read [I Can Run a 5k...Then Can't Lift a Spoon](#) to learn possible causes and ways of managing this fluctuating symptom.

Gait Difficulties

Several factors including muscle weakness, spasticity, loss of balance, vertigo, sensory deficit and fatigue can affect gait (walking) difficulties. Learn how one woman is conquering foot drop and continuing to [run the world](#).

Heat Sensitivity

60-80% of people living with MS experience worsening of their symptoms when they become overheated. Read how one man is [acing temperature control](#) while maintaining an active lifestyle.

It's Hard to Swallow

Nearly 40% of people with MS have trouble swallowing because of muscle spasms, weakness, decreased sensation and decreased coordination. Read more about why some people find it [hard to swallow](#) and what you can do to make it easier.

Jutting Falls

Research shows that more than half of people with MS fall in a given year, and more than half of those fall more than once. Increase your knowledge about of the risk factors associated with falls and get strategies to reduce your risk of falling with [Free From Falls](#), a comprehensive fall prevention program.

Kissing

...or more than just kissing. As many as 75% of people living with MS experience sexual problems which stem from nerve damage, fatigue, and spasticity, as well as from psychological factors relating to self-esteem and mood changes. Hear how MS can affect sexual feelings and functions, as well as ways to help you have fulfilling, intimate relationships, in the video below.

Less Common Symptoms

Explore the [less common symptoms of MS](#)—what causes them and what treatment options are available.

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](#).

Numbness or Tingling

Numbness of the face, body or extremities is a common early symptom experienced by those eventually diagnosed as having MS. Read more about [Food Network's Chopped Champion, Chef Chris Holland](#), and his experience with the numbness that eventually led to his MS diagnosis.

Optic Neuritis

As one of the most common vision problems associated with MS, optic neuritis is often a temporary yet frightening symptom. Learn more about the [three most common vision problems](#) and what you can do to cope.

Pain

One study suggests that up to 80% of people living with MS will experience some type of pain during the course of their illness. Hear pain management tools and treatment options in the video below.

Quality of sleep

Sleep disturbances can take many forms including reduced sleep quality, too much sleep, excessive tiredness, sleep related breathing problems including sleep apnea, narcolepsy, restless legs/body syndrome, and more. Watch the video below to hear more about why sleep disturbances are common in MS along with possible treatment and management strategies to help you get a restful night's sleep.

Remembering

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.

Spasticity

Approximately 80% of people living with MS have spasticity caused by damage to the nerves which control muscle impulses. Explore ways of [controlling spasticity](#).

Taste Changes

One-fourth of people living with MS experience a diminished sense of taste. [Learn why](#).

Uncontrolled Mood Changes

Laughing, shouting or crying at inappropriate times, mood swings, fickle feelings, sadness and anger can be both scary and confusing. Discover how you're not alone with the [shifting](#)

[moods in MS.](#)

Vertigo and Dizziness

Feeling off balance or lightheaded, or having the sensation that your surroundings are spinning, can restrict several activities. Explore [ways to cope](#).

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 experiencing weakness while living with MS stay [on the move](#).

X, Y, Z

MS symptoms are variable and unpredictable. One person might experience only one or two symptoms while another person may experience X, Y or Z.

Learn more about how to [recognize and manage the symptoms of MS](#).