

# Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Self-Management Plan

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow your medical provider's directions regarding medicines.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not stop medicines without first checking with your medical or mental health provider.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not restart medicines without first checking with your medical provider.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure your medicines have not expired; check the dates!</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not skip or double up on your medicines.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tell your medical providers about ALL medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter vitamins, and before taking herbal remedies.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep a medication list and bring to your medical appointments.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow your medical provider's recommended dietary recommendations.</li> </ul> |
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## Green Flags — All Clear

## What this means ...



### If your:

- Medications are taken as prescribed.
- Symptoms do not significantly impact your daily tasks.

- You are doing well.
- Your MS is stable.

**Keep up the good work!**

## Yellow Flags — Caution

## What this means ...



### If you have:

- Sudden or worsening weakness including difficulty transferring
- Trouble walking, loss of balance, and are falling
- Increase in muscle stiffness and spasms
- Numbness or tingling in hands
- Inability to move your legs
- Changes in your thinking, having increased forgetfulness or difficulty concentrating
- Depression
- Seizures
- Dizziness, feeling lightheaded
- Flu or other infection
- Vision changes, blurred, graying, blindness, uncontrolled eye movements, changes in depth or color perception, "seeing double"

- Your MS may be progressing.
- You may be experiencing a relapse.
- You may need a medication adjustment.
- You could be having a side effect to medicines.

**Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or health care provider if symptoms do not improve.**

**Name:**

**Number:**

**Instructions:**

**If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.**

## Red Flags — Stop and Think

## What this means ...



### If you have:

- Vision changes and painful eye movements.
- Sudden loss of strength in the arms and legs

- You could have optic neuritis.
- You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

**If possible, notify your health care provider's office.**

**Name:**

**Number:**

**Follow these instructions: CALL 9-1-1**

**If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 911. Emergency!**

# Multiple Sclerosis Facts

- Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, progressive and sometimes disabling autoimmune disease of the central nervous system. For most people, the disease begins at about 30 years of age with acute episodes of neurologic dysfunction followed by periods of partial or complete remission with clinical stability between relapses. This is called the "relapsing-remitting phase" of MS. Except in patients who continue to exhibit a relapsing-remitting pattern, this phase is usually followed by progressive clinical disability, with or without superimposed relapses and remissions. In some patients, MS is progressive from the start.
- The symptoms and severity of MS vary greatly, depending upon the areas of the central nervous system that are affected.
- The most common problems or changes to the mind and body include:
  - **Bladder and bowel control**—frequently needing to urinate, including getting up during the night to urinate, or trouble emptying your bladder. Bowel problems, especially constipation are common.
  - **Coordination**—muscle weakness or spasms can make it harder to walk. Balance problems, numb feet, and fatigue can also make walking difficult.
  - **Dizziness**—feeling dizzy or lightheaded (but usually not vertigo—the feeling that the room is spinning).
  - **Fatigue**—feeling very tired, usually in the afternoon, with weakness, slowed thinking and/or sleepiness. Sometimes people even feel tired after a good night's sleep.
  - **Muscle spasms**—usually affecting the leg muscles, and for many people are an early symptom of MS. In progressive MS, muscle spasms affect about six in ten people. You might feel mild stiffness or strong, painful muscle spasms. Muscle weakness or spasms make it harder to walk so balance problems can occur.
  - **Sexual problems**—including vaginal dryness in women and erection problems in men. Both men and women may be less responsive to touch, have a lower sex drive, or have trouble reaching orgasm.
  - **Speech and swallowing**—with long pauses between words and/or slurred or nasal speech. Some people also develop swallowing problems in more advanced stages of MS.
  - **Thinking problems**—trouble concentrating that comes and goes. For most, this means slowed thinking, poor attention, or fuzzy memory. Rarely, people can have severe problems that make it hard to do daily tasks. MS usually does not change your intellect and ability to read and understand conversation.
  - **Tremors**—minor shakes affect about half of people with MS, and make it hard to do everyday activities.
  - **Unusual sensations**—like "pins and needles" or feelings of numbness, itching, burning, or stabbing pains.
  - **Vision**—problems with eyes can be one of the first MS symptoms. They usually affect only one eye and go away on their own. Your sight may be blurry, gray, or have a dark spot in the center. You may suddenly have eye pain and temporary vision loss.

## What can you do?

- Because MS varies so much, it's best not to compare yourself with other people who have MS. Your experience is likely to be different. Most people learn to manage their symptoms and can keep leading full, active lives. Remember, stress reduction is important!

## Resources

E-mail the [National MS Society](http://NationalMSociety.org), [Greater Washington Northwest Chapter](http://GreaterWashingtonNorthwestChapter.org), based in Seattle, at [MSnorthwest@nmsswas.org](mailto:MSnorthwest@nmsswas.org) or [greaterWAinfo@nmsswas.org](mailto:greaterWAinfo@nmsswas.org), or call 206-284-4254 (1-800-344-4867).

## Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County— plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County.



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