

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Self-Management Plan

- Follow your medical provider's directions regarding medicines.
- Do not stop, skip, or double up on medicines without first checking with your medical provider.
- Do not restart medicines without first checking with your medical provider.
- Make sure your medicines have not expired; check the dates!
- Tell your medical providers about ALL medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter vitamins, and before taking herbal remedies.
- Keep a medication list and bring it to your medical appointments.
- Follow your medical provider's recommended

Green Flags—All Clear



If you have:

- Taking medicine (s) as prescribed
- Your MS symptoms do not significantly impact your daily tasks

What this means ...

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

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags—Caution



If you have:

- Sudden or worsening weakness including difficulty transferring, trouble walking, loss of balance, and are falling.
- Increase in muscle stiffness and spasms.
- Worsening numbness/tingling in hands.
- Changes in your thinking, having increased forgetfulness or difficulty concentrating.
- Seizures
- Feel dizzy or lightheaded.
- Have the Flu or other infection.
- Vision changes, blurred, graying, blindness, uncontrolled eye movements, changes in depth or color perception, "seeing double."

What this means ...

- 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.
- Your provider may want to order lab tests.

Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or health care provider. You may need to be seen at a clinic 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



If you have:

- Severe pain
- Sudden vision change
- Any worsening symptoms that prevent you from eating, drinking, caring for yourself, or walking.

What this means ...

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

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

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: CALL 9-1-1

If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 9-1-1. Emergency!

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Fast 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. In progressive MS, muscle spasms affect about six in ten people. You might feel mild stiffness or strong, painful muscle spasms.
 - **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 "brain fog". 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 is 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!

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. For information about services or interpretation assistance, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail

info@communitylivingconnections.org.



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