

Multiple Sclerosis (MS): Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

Multiple sclerosis, also called MS, is a disease that can affect the brain, spinal cord, and nerves to the eyes. MS can cause problems with muscle control and strength, vision, balance, feeling, and thinking. Whatever your symptoms are, taking medicine correctly and following your doctor's advice for home care can help you maintain your quality of life.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

General care

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Use a cane, walker, or scooter if your doctor suggests it.
- Keep doing your normal activities as much as you can.
- If you have problems urinating, press or tap your bladder area to help start urine flow. If you have trouble controlling your urine, plan your fluid intake and activities so that a toilet will be available when you need it.
- Spend time with family and friends. Join a support group for people with MS if you want extra help.
- Depression is common with this condition. Tell your doctor if you have trouble sleeping, are eating too much or are not hungry, or feel sad or tearful all the time. Depression can be treated with medicine and counseling.

Diet and exercise

- Eat a balanced diet.
- If you have problems swallowing, change how and what you eat:
 - Try thick drinks, such as milk shakes. They are easier to swallow than other fluids.
 - Do not eat foods that crumble easily. These can cause choking.
 - Use a blender to prepare food. Soft foods need less chewing.
 - Eat small meals often so that you do not get tired from eating larger meals.
- Get exercise on most days. Work with your doctor to set up a program of walking, swimming, or other exercise that you are able to do. A physical therapist can teach you exercises if you cannot walk but can move your limbs and trunk. Or you can do exercises to help with coordination and balance. You can help improve muscle stiffness by doing exercises while lying in certain positions.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have a change in symptoms.
- You fall or have another injury.
- You have symptoms of a urinary infection. For example:
 - You have blood or pus in your urine.
 - You have pain in your back just below your rib cage. This is called flank pain.
 - You have a fever, chills, or body aches.
 - It hurts to urinate.
 - You have groin or belly pain.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You want more information about MS or medicines.
- You have questions about alternative treatments. Do not use any other treatments without talking to your doctor first.

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