

Understanding multiple sclerosis

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a common condition affecting millions of people across the world.



WHAT IS MS?

MS is an autoimmune disease. Your immune system is designed to fight off invaders like viruses and bacteria. Autoimmune means the immune system attacks healthy tissue by mistake.

With MS, the immune system attacks a protective coating on the nerves in the brain and spinal cord. When this coating, called the myelin sheath, is damaged, the nerves have trouble sending signals.



TYPES OF MS

Most people with MS have relapsing-remitting MS (RRMS). RRMS causes MS symptoms over a few days or weeks, known as a relapse. Then, MS symptoms go away for months or even years. When symptoms go away, this is called remission. The relapse and remission cycle repeats itself over time.

Other people may have symptoms that slowly get worse. They don't have periods of remission. This is known as primary progressive or secondary progressive MS.

SYMPTOMS OF MS

MS symptoms are very different from person to person. They can also change over time. Symptoms include:

- Feeling tired (fatigue)
- Weakness
- Loss of balance
- Numbness or tingling
- Stiff muscles or spasms
- Blurry vision
- Dizziness
- Loss of control of bladder or bowels
- Trouble with memory, learning or attention
- Speech problems
- Shaking
- Seizures

If you have one or more of these symptoms, it doesn't mean you have MS. However, you should see your doctor to find out the cause.

HOW IS MS TREATED?

If you have MS, see your doctor regularly. Treatment can help slow the disease and manage symptoms. There are different medications available to treat MS, and physical therapy is helpful for some people. A doctor who specializes in treating MS can recommend the best treatment for you.

While there is no cure, treatments for MS continue to improve. With a doctor's help, many people with MS can manage their symptoms and feel their best.