

About Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

What is MS?

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is an unpredictable disease of the central nervous system in which the insulating, protective covering (myelin sheath) surrounding the nerves, and the nerve itself, is destroyed or damaged, resulting in interference with the brain and spinal cord's signals to various parts of the body. The disease typically attacks multiple areas within the central nervous system, causing plaques or scar tissue formation, hence the name multiple sclerosis.

What causes MS?

The cause of MS is unknown. However, a person's genetics, gender and environment contribute to susceptibility, resistance and pattern of the course of MS. MS is characterized by an abnormal immune response against the central nervous system.

Who is diagnosed with MS?

MS usually affects young adults between the ages of 20 and 50. Nearly three times as many women as men are diagnosed with the disease. MS is found most frequently among people in colder climates, usually defined as north of the 40th parallel. Studies strongly suggest that where a person is born and lives during his or her first fifteen years of life influences the likelihood of developing MS. Finally, MS is more common in Caucasians of northern European descent.

Is there a cure for MS?

No. To date there are eight medications which have been shown to be effective in the treatment of relapsing forms of MS. While none of these medications are a cure for MS, they have greatly changed the management of MS.

Published research, supported by Can Do Multiple Sclerosis™, demonstrated the beneficial effects of exercise for people with MS. A landmark study published in 1996 demonstrated physical and emotional health improvements for people with MS, using a regular exercise program.

Other research examining health promotion programs, like those principles taught at Can Do MS' programs, have shown improvements in health related quality of life and overall health promoting behaviors. Survey research has demonstrated that people with MS want more information on lifestyle management, such as exercise, nutrition and stress management.

Symptoms of MS

- Numbness
- Burning sensation
- Loss of coordination and/or balance problems
- Extreme fatigue
- Loss of bladder control
- Bowel difficulties
- Partial or complete loss of vision
- Memory loss and other cognitive loss
- Weakness
- Spasticity or stiffness of the muscles
- Depression and/or anxiety
- Problems with speech and swallowing

Does Can Do MS recommend any therapies to treat MS?

Can Do MS is an educational organization that gives people living with MS the knowledge, skills, tools and confidence to adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors and actively co-manage their MS. We encourage you to discuss any drug therapy or procedure with your health care professional.