

HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time

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Multiple Sclerosis Awareness

8 Early Symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis

- 1. Vision problems:** Visual problems are one of the most common symptoms of MS. Inflammation affects the optic nerve and disrupts central vision. This can cause blurred vision, double vision, or loss of vision.
- 2. Tingling and numbness:** MS affects nerves in the brain and spinal cord, sending conflicting signals around the body (or no signals). This results in numbness. Tingling sensations and numbness are one of the most common warning signs of MS. Common sites of numbness include the face, arms, legs, and fingers.
- 3. Pain and spasms:** Chronic pain and involuntary muscle spasms are also common with MS. You might experience stiff muscles or joints as well as uncontrollable, painful jerking movements of the extremities.
- 4. Fatigue and weakness:** Unexplained fatigue and weakness affect about 80 percent of people in the early stages of MS. Chronic fatigue occurs when nerves deteriorate in the spinal column. Usually, the fatigue appears suddenly and lasts for weeks before improving. The weakness is most noticeable in the legs at first.
- 5. Balance problems and dizziness:** Dizziness and problems with coordination and balance can decrease the mobility of someone with MS.
- 6. Bladder and bowel dysfunction:** A dysfunctional bladder is another symptom occurring in up to 80 percent of people with MS. This can include frequent urination, strong urges to urinate, or inability to hold in urine.
- 7. Sexual dysfunction:** Sexual arousal can be a problem for people with MS because it begins in the central nervous system.
- 8. Cognitive problems:** About half of people with MS will develop some kind of issue with their cognitive function. This can include:
 - shortened attention span
 - language problems
 - difficulty staying organized

Depression and other emotional health problems are also common.

Symptoms can come and go. See a neurologist to get tested if you have symptoms. Treatment is available.

The cause of Multiple Sclerosis is not fully understood, so there are no direct preventative strategies. However, there are certain lifestyle changes you can make to reduce your overall risk of developing MS, given the common findings of those diagnosed with MS.

- Quit smoking
- Get adequate sun exposure and supplement with vitamin D (5,000 IU per day in winter)
- Eat a healthy diet low in saturated fat, and supplement with flaxseed oil
- Keep your stress levels down and exercise regularly



Be informed and recognize the symptoms!



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National Nutrition Month

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends people adjust their eating habits to address the nutritional needs of their bodies during all stages of life. In addition to maintaining healthful eating habits throughout life, use the following tips :

Teens to 20s — Build bone density by eating and drinking calcium-rich foods and beverages such as fat-free or low-fat dairy milk or yogurt or calcium-fortified soy beverages. Non-dairy sources of calcium include fortified cereals, beans, some leafy greens and canned salmon with bones.

20s to 30s — Reduce your risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease by eating more dietary fiber, including whole grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds. Women of childbearing age should include sources of folate, such as beans and peas and dark-green leafy vegetables, and eat foods fortified with folic acid such as breads, cereals and other grain products. A folic acid supplement may also be needed and should be discussed with a health care provider.

30s to 40s — Continue to eat a variety of nutritious foods, especially plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and beans, peas and lentils for vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and dietary fiber.

40s to 50s — Fine tune your healthful eating habits and continue to incorporate regular physical activity as your body changes due to fluctuating hormones and slowing metabolism. Also continue to focus on ways to limit foods and beverages with added sugars, salt and saturated fat.

60s and beyond — Continue to include a variety of protein-rich foods to maintain bone strength and incorporate strength-building activities to maintain muscle. Good sources of protein include seafood, lean cuts of meat, eggs, beans, tofu and nuts. Animal-based protein foods also provide vitamin B12, which is a concern for some older adults. Foods also may be fortified with vitamin B12 or a supplement may be recommended by your health care provider.



Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle!

