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## **A whole lot of symptoms with far less treatment options for multiple sclerosis**

Multiple Sclerosis is a disorder of the central nervous system involving decreased nerve function associated with the formation of scars on the covering of nerve cells. Multiple sclerosis (MS) affects approximately 1 out of 1,600 people. Women are affected about 60% of the time. The disorder most commonly begins between 20 to 40 years old. MS is one of the major causes of disability in adults under age 65.

Multiple sclerosis involves repeated episodes of inflammation of nervous tissue in any area of the central nervous system. The location of the inflammation varies from person to person and from episode to episode. The inflammation destroys the covering of the nerve cells in the area called the myelin sheath. This leaves multiple areas of scar tissue along the covering of the nerve cells. Sclerosis slows or blocks the transmission of nerve impulses in that area, resulting in the development of the symptoms of MS.

Symptoms vary because the location and extent of each attack varies. There is usually a stepwise progression of the disorder, with episodes that last days, weeks, or months alternating with times of reduced or no symptoms. Relapse is common.

The exact cause of the inflammation associated with MS is unknown. Geographic studies indicate there may be an environmental factor involved with MS. It has a higher incidence in northern Europe, northern United States, southern Australia, and New Zealand than in other areas of the world. There seems to be a familial tendency toward the disorder, with higher incidence in certain family groups than in the general population. An increase in the number of immune cells in the body of a person with MS indicates that there may be a type of immune that triggers the disorder. The most frequent theories about the cause of multiple sclerosis include a virus-type organism, an abnormality of the genes responsible for control of the immune system, or a combination of both factors. Risks include a family history of MS and living in a geographical area with a higher incidence rate for MS. There is no known cure for multiple sclerosis. Treatment is aimed at controlling symptoms and maintaining function to give the maximum quality of life.

Medications vary depending on the symptoms that occur. Baclofen, dantrolene, diazepam or other anti-spasmodic medications may be used to reduce muscle spasticity. Cholinergic medications may be helpful to reduce urinary problems. Antidepressant medications may be helpful for mood or behavior symptoms. Amantadine may be given for fatigue. Corticosteroids or ACTH may be used to suppress the inflammation in an attempt to reduce the duration of an attack. Medications that suppress the immune system may be helpful. Interferon may be helpful for some people.

Physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, or similar forms of therapy may be helpful. This may improve the person's outlook, reduce depression, maximize function, and improve coping skills. A planned exercise program early in the course of the disorder helps to maintain muscle tone. Social work, counseling, and support groups may aid in coping. A healthy lifestyle is encouraged, including good general nutrition. Adequate rest and relaxation help to

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maintain energy levels. Attempts should be made to avoid fatigue, stress, physical deterioration, temperature extremes, and illness to reduce factors that may trigger an MS attack.

The symptoms vary in many ways and different people experience different symptoms. They can experience weakness, paralysis, or tremors in one or more extremities. Muscle spasticity, muscle atrophy, numbness or tingling in the body. MS also effects the eyes with possible loss of vision or double vision. Loss of balance, and decreased coordination is also possible.

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The reason that I have decided to write about MS is that my mother has the disease. She has been living with it for almost 16 years now and has almost become nothing but normal to me. She went to the doctors after she had trouble walking my sister in her stroller and they discovered she had MS. At first it wasn't too bad she could walk on her own but just had certain times when it would become harder than others to perform tasks. In just a few years she was in need of a walker than soon after needed a wheelchair. She has been in a wheelchair for about ten years. For the first couple years or so she was still able to do things on her own but now she almost totally dependant on others for daily functions of life. She has lived her life to the fullest of her extent but she still missed out on a lot of things she wanted to do or now wants to do. My family all sacrifices some things to help her but we don't mind doing anything for her. Now she can't walk and is confined to a wheelchair at all times, her condition has become worse just recently now she is having a lot of trouble moving her arms and hands. She was an avid reader and now can not even turn the pages of her book.

There are a lot of advances in the progress of MS but nothing is completely getting rid of the disease. Now they are working on a plasma transfusion which has worked for 40 percent of the people who tried it. The people were totally paralyzed from the waist down and in fourteen days they were up and walking on their own. So hopefully my mother can take advantage and maybe be able to improve her condition one-day.