

# MS FACT SHEET

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## Understanding Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is an autoimmune disease that attacks the body's own immune system and destroys the myelin sheath that insulates neurons in the brain and spinal cord. Disruption of communication between the brain and other parts of the body prevent normal passage of sensations and control messages, leading to the symptoms of MS.

Symptoms of MS may be mild, such as numbness in the limbs, or severe, such as paralysis or loss of vision. Approximately half of all people with MS experience cognitive impairments, such as difficulties with concentration, attention, memory and poor judgment, but at first such symptoms are usually mild and frequently overlooked. Depression is another common feature of MS.

## Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis

Relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RRMS), a relapsing form of multiple sclerosis, is the most common type of MS. A person with RRMS experiences attacks (also called relapses or exacerbations) of worsening neurological functioning, followed by periods of remission in which partial or complete recovery occurs.

## The Multiple Sclerosis Patient Population

Worldwide, MS affects approximately 2.3 million people, with approximately 400,000 diagnosed cases in the United States. These numbers are approximate, since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) do not require physicians in the United States to report new cases, but symptoms of MS may be completely invisible.

Most people are diagnosed with MS between ages 20 and 50. At least two to three times more women than men have been diagnosed with MS. MS is more common in Caucasians with a northern European ancestry, but does occur in most other ethnic groups, including African-Americans, Asians and Hispanics/Latinos.

MS is not considered a fatal disease, and the majority of those with MS can live a normal life.

## Multiple Sclerosis Management

Today there is no cure for MS, but many people are able to lead healthy, productive lives. Research has shown that combining a treatment regimen with lifestyle management can reduce the frequency of MS relapses. Experts agree that once you find a routine that works for you, it's important that you stick with it! People living with MS are encouraged to remain active as appropriate physical activity has been shown to have a positive effect on MS symptoms. Remember to consult with your doctor before beginning any exercise routine.

Source: National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS)