



## 10 Tips for People Living with MS

### 1. Become educated about MS

It can be frightening to enter the unknown following a diagnosis of MS. The best strategy to ease anxieties and regain a sense of control is to become educated about MS. Good information is key to making decisions about your life and your future. Some sources of information for MS include: your neurologist, your healthcare team, the MS Society of Canada, online resources, and connecting with other people living with MS. Not all information has equal value, so be selective as there are many false and unfounded claims. To learn about accessing reliable information, see the resource, [Accessing Health Information](#).

If you have questions about MS, reach out to an MS Navigator at the MS Knowledge Network. The MS Knowledge Network is the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada's hub of knowledge, led by a team of navigators who provide consistent, quality information and support for anyone in Canada. MS Navigators are available to assist anyone in Canada from 8am to 8pm ET, Monday to Friday. Contact an MS Navigator today by calling 1-844-859-6789 or send an email to [msnavigators@mssociety.ca](mailto:msnavigators@mssociety.ca)

### 2. Listen to your body

MS can be unpredictable. Symptoms may come and go, and you may have good days and bad days. Your body is trying to tell you something: listen. Try to achieve some balance in your life and learn to pace yourself. Get the rest your body needs when it needs it. Rediscover what makes you happy—and do it.

### 3. You are the same person as you were before MS

Living with a chronic disease doesn't define you. A diagnosis may feel like a label and you may start thinking of yourself as different and may worry that others also see you differently. Just remember, you are the same person you were before the diagnosis. You have MS—MS doesn't have you.

### 4. Stay Healthy

Having MS doesn't prevent you from getting another health condition. Like anyone else, you still need to guard against heart disease, diabetes, and other health concerns. Stop smoking, eat sensibly, reduce stress, and exercise regularly at a pace and level of exertion that you can manage. See your healthcare team for annual physical exams and practice preventative medicine (pap smear, breast examination, prostate exam, cholesterol and blood sugar tests). Some health conditions such as infections may make your MS symptoms worse. If you get an infection, make sure to treat it promptly.

## 5. Managing your mood

Approximately half of all people diagnosed with MS will develop clinical depression at some point over the course of their disease. Depression is a condition that can appear as a low mood, irritability, loss of appetite, poor sleep, or lack of enjoyment in doing the things you previously liked to do. Depression in MS might be due to life changes that come with MS or it can result from changes in the brain caused by MS lesions. Some medications used to treat MS symptoms might also be associated with depression. If you are feeling especially down and you think you have depression—see your healthcare team. Depression is a condition that requires treatment and can be effectively treated with medications, with or without therapy. No one needs to go through depression alone; get the help and treatment you need.

## 6. Involve your loved ones

Though you are the person living with MS, it can affect your loved ones. Talk to them and involve them in the decisions that must be made. Ask for their help and share responsibilities. Roles within the family or social circle may change but this does not have to be a bad thing. Involving your loved ones in MS can be a growth experience. For your loved ones, talking about MS and living with the disease will be an ongoing process as everyone learns to manage life with MS.

## 7. Develop a support network

Developing a strong support network can be beneficial if circumstances due to MS change. There are many resources and services available to people affected by MS. Talk to your healthcare team such as physicians, neurologists, nurses, MS clinic staff, and reach out to community resources such as the MS Society of Canada about what support resources are available. Some examples of community resources include: personal support workers, mental health services, dietitians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social organizations, income supports, and government services and programs.

## 8. Plan for the future

A practical aspect of navigating MS is financial planning for the future. Look at your income, assets, debts, benefits, and other resources. Developing a financial plan will provide you and your loved ones with income security and peace of mind. Planning for the future may also mean meeting personal, academic, and professional goals. Like any goal, it will take time and planning. Though MS may present challenges to achieving your goals, there are resources available to help overcome some of them and allow you to continue pursuing your vision for the future.

## 9. Build resiliency

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from a difficult situation or circumstance -- to find happiness and life satisfaction despite challenges life offers. Resilience helps create a mindset of growth and opportunities, of seeing obstacles as challenges rather than threats. Read more about [resiliency](#).

## **10. Advocate for yourself**

There are many people and resources you can access to get the help you need. Sometimes this can be a difficult and time-consuming process. Persistence pays off when trying to find answers to your questions. Stay with it. Ask questions. Make calls. Keep pressing until you get the answers you need. Contact an MS navigator, who can direct you to the appropriate resources at 1-844-859-6789 or send an email to [msnavigators@mssociety.ca](mailto:msnavigators@mssociety.ca)