Benefits & Barriers

What are the benefits of working?

What do you see as the barriers to continuing to work?
Over 24,000 people in Australia have MS
87% are working age
People with MS who leave employment do so mainly because of the symptoms of the disease rather than because of workplace factors such as inflexibility of working conditions or being asked to leave. Australian MS Longitudinal Study

Managing Symptoms assists in Managing Work

Staying at Work

Do not alter your working conditions, hours or consider leaving work before you have reviewed all options.

Call MS Connect to discuss
Understand your Legal Rights

- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Discrimination
- Reasonable Adjustments

What are you entitled to?

- Leave
  - Sick leave
  - Annual leave
  - Unpaid leave
- HR Policy
- Employment Contract
- Award
- Union
Entitlements

Centrelink Allowances and Payments include:
• Mobility Allowance
• Sickness Allowance
• Disability Support Pension
• Essential Medical Equipment Payment*

Government Entitlements
• Better Access to Mental Health Care Plan
• Chronic Disease Management Plan
• Medical Cooling Concession*
• Parking Permit
• Multi Purpose Taxi Program
• GST Free Cars

*Requires a health care card

Review Job Requirements

Job Description

Inherent requirements
• Physical requirements
• Cognitive requirements
Consider the symptoms you experience and how they impact working?

Symptoms Impacting Work – a case study

- Fatigue
- Cognitive function including Memory
- Mobility
- Visual Disturbance
- Bladder & Bowel Changes
- Heat Sensitivity
- Depression
Disclosure

Consider Who, When & What

Pros
• e.g. enables changes in the workplace and role

Cons
• e.g. may lead to people focusing on your health rather than your abilities

Seeking Advice

• MS Connect 1800 042 138
  • MS Health Professionals
  • MS Employment Support Consultant
• Manager / Supervisor
• HR Department
• Union
• Maurice Blackburn Lawyers - 1800 810 812
• Advocacy Agencies
• Other Employment Agencies
Our Services

- MS Connect
- Library
- Physiotherapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Social Workers
- Nurses
- Peer Support
- Education Programs
- Volunteers

MS Employment Support Service

- Information, education, support to individuals
  - Currently employed with concerns
  - Job seekers
- Assessment (workplace, vocational, physical, cognitive)
- Assistance in managing symptoms
- Recommendations and Assistance on modifications and equipment to work role and work site
- Advice and Assistance on ‘whole of life issues’ impacting on employment
- Advocacy and links to other services
Summary

- Be Proactive and Plan Ahead
- Disclosure is your choice
- Make informed decisions not impulsive decisions
- Seek advice before making any changes

Resources

- Handout Pack
- Resource Table
- MS Australia
  1800 042 138 (Freecall)

msconnect@ms.org.au
Now that you have had some time to adjust to your recent diagnosis and learn about multiple sclerosis (MS), you may have concerns about the potential impact of MS on your working life. This information sheet helps answer some commonly-asked questions about employment and MS. However, it is not a substitute for professional medical or legal advice.

Disclosure in the workplace: To tell or not to tell

**Should I disclose that I have MS to my employer and work colleagues?**

Deciding whether to disclose a diagnosis of MS is not simple. In general, the decision should be based on your own needs and priorities, whilst also taking into account the needs and priorities of those who you choose to tell. There is no single answer or strategy that is right for everyone. It may help to take some time to consider the possible benefits and consequences of making your diagnosis public.

On the positive side, disclosing may:

- provide you with additional support from your employer and colleagues once they have a better understanding of what you have been experiencing.
- reduce the difficulties associated with ‘covering up’ (e.g. explaining absences from work).
- give you an opportunity to ask for adjustments to the workplace that can maintain or even improve your productivity and ease your employer’s concerns, misconceptions or questions.

The potentially negative consequences of disclosure are that:

- employers and colleagues may have negative views or inaccurate stereotypes about MS (e.g. they may assume that you will be unable to continue performing your job).
- employers and colleagues may also be concerned that you will become unreliable and frequently need to take time off, putting more pressure on them.
- your employer may assume that you will not want or be eligible for further training or promotions.
- colleagues may react to you differently, focusing on your health status rather than your work talents and abilities.

**When is the best time to disclose?**

If you are not experiencing any work-related difficulties and have no visible symptoms you may wish to consider delaying disclosure in the workplace.

Before you disclose, consider the possible benefits and consequences of making your diagnosis public. You cannot take it back once you have told an employer or work colleague.

If you are a member of a union, get their help.

Before you disclose, talk through your options with a health professional at MS Australia – ACT/NSW/Vic, who can guide you to appropriate sources of information and legal support. You may find it helpful to talk through your decision with a health professional at MS Australia.

If you do decide to disclose to your employer, make an appointment at a mutually convenient time. Try to avoid peak work times when your employer may be preoccupied with other pressing matters.
Do I have a legal obligation to disclose my MS to my employer?

No, not unless your symptoms are an occupational health and safety risk to you or others. For example, if you have symptoms of optic neuritis and you are a truck driver, you would probably have to tell your employer about your MS symptoms.

There are a few occupations where there is a statutory duty to tell your employer about any pre-existing health problems. Otherwise, it is up to you whether you tell an employer (or not) about your symptom or that you have MS.

Get professional advice about whether you must or should tell your employer that you have MS.

Do I need to disclose at a job interview?

If your symptoms of MS are visible or impact on your work, you may wish to disclose at the interview and provide information about MS, how it affects you and your work, and what workplace adjustments you need to meet the job requirements. Some employers will require you to disclose anything which impacts on your ability to meet the job requirements. Failing to disclose relevant information may have consequences, such as termination of employment – but not always.

Ultimately, the aim of an interview is to match an individual’s abilities with the inherent job requirements and to find the best applicant for the job. In some circumstances, having MS may be irrelevant and you may decide to defer disclosure until after the initial interview, once the employer is already interested in hiring you on the merits of your qualifications and experience.

Can an employer ask me to submit a pre-employment medical assessment which might result in disclosing I have MS?

Generally speaking, yes, if the assessment is genuinely and reasonably designed to assess your physical and/or mental ability to perform the requirements of the position. Of course, you can’t be forced to go to a pre-employment medical assessment but it will probably affect your chances of getting the job if you don’t.

Where do I stand if I don’t disclose and become unwell on the job?

You have the same rights and responsibilities as any person who is unwell at work, including the right not to be discriminated against or dismissed because you are unwell, as well as the responsibility not to endanger your own safety or that of others. Becoming unwell at work may create a reason (or obligation) to disclose, if only to explain to your employer what is happening.

If you tell your employer that you have MS, having lied about it before you started work, your employer may have the right to terminate your employment – but not always (e.g. if you have a reasonable explanation of why you didn’t tell them, if it was a long time ago or if it was not relevant to being able to do the job).

Do I need to disclose to my employer if I have already disclosed to the driver licensing authority in my state?

The driver licensing authority in your state or territory requires that you notify them about any medical or neurological conditions which might affect your driving ability. This is entirely separate from any obligation you might have to your employer.
Adjustments in the workplace: What is considered reasonable?

If I am already employed when diagnosed, what responsibilities does my employer have to assist me – such as modifications to the workplace or flexibility of hours?

Under the Fair Work Act, employers must take reasonable steps to accommodate the working needs of employees with MS, unless this causes unjustifiable hardship to the business.

Adjustments may include re-negotiating an employee’s hours, relocating or modifying an employee’s workstation, allowing the employee to take time off work for medical appointments and treatment or, in some circumstances, changing an employee’s job duties.

Get specialist advice about your situation.

What is considered ‘unjustifiable hardship’ in terms of making adjustments for MS?

This depends on a number of factors, such as the effect of the symptoms you are experiencing, the nature of your work, the impact of the adjustments on others and the associated costs. Some adjustments might be considered an unjustifiable hardship for a small business but could be accommodated in a larger business.

What can I reasonably expect from my employer if I wish to negotiate reduced hours? Can my employer insist I keep working full-time when I have a doctor’s letter saying I should only work part-time?

The answers to these questions depend on the nature of your work and your symptoms, as well as the nature and circumstances of the business. An employer is not obliged to accommodate you if, by doing so, it would cause them unjustifiable hardship. If the inherent (core) requirements of the job genuinely include working full-time hours, then the employer can insist you work full-time. If you cannot comply, the employer may terminate your employment.

However, determining the inherent (core) job requirements as opposed to the way the job has always been done is not always straightforward. Some employers may be willing to try a new approach, particularly if it means keeping a valued employee.

Bear in mind, a ‘negotiation’ is most likely to be successful if both you and your employer are able to approach it with goodwill, openness and flexibility.

I work full-time now. Can my employer force me to work part-time or casual hours now that I have disclosed I have MS?

This will depend on your contract of employment and any Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) or award. Generally, unless the employer has a right to do this under your contract, EBA or award, they can’t reduce your hours without your permission.

However, in some circumstances, if the symptoms of MS are interfering with your ability to continue working full-time, your employer might be able to insist that you change your hours if you want to keep working there.

My company is being restructured. What can I do if I suspect my employer will make me redundant knowing that I have MS?

If the redundancy is genuine and you have been fairly selected for retrenchment, then your employer may have to offer you an alternative position or terminate your employment. If no suitable position can be found and your employment is terminated for redundancy, you may be entitled to a redundancy or severance payment. This will depend on the terms of your employment.

If your employer selected you for redundancy unfairly or singled you out because you have MS, you may have a right to claim unfair dismissal or unlawful discrimination. Speak to a lawyer.

I can perform my duties but cannot access the building, which is a rental property. What obligation does the landlord have to make the building accessible?

The obligation of landlords and tenants can overlap as a result of both the legislation and the terms of the lease. Both landlords and tenants (if they control the premises) have an obligation under discrimination law not to discriminate against people with disabilities. Sometimes, but not always, this will include an obligation to make modifications to a building.
Disability discrimination: How am I protected?

Can my employer terminate my employment just because I have MS?

No, this would be unlawful discrimination as well as unlawful termination.

An employer can terminate your employment if you can no longer perform the inherent (core) requirements of your job or can only do so if the employer needs to make adjustments to accommodate you in a way which would impose unjustifiable hardship.

However, under the Fair Work Act, your employer must take reasonable steps to try to accommodate you in the work place.

If I disclose I have MS, how do I know if I am being unlawfully discriminated against?

There are two types of unlawful discrimination:

- **Direct disability discrimination** is where you receive less favourable treatment because of your disability. Whether treatment is less favourable is determined by examining how a person without a disability is or would be treated in similar circumstances.

- **Indirect disability discrimination** is where practices that might appear to be neutral and may be intended to be fair have an unequal and unfair effect on people with a disability.

Fitness for work, leave of absence and workers compensation

How long can I take off work due to MS without losing my job?

This will depend on the terms of your employment contract and any Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) or award which applies to your employment. You might have an entitlement to paid or unpaid leave, or both.

It would be unlawful for your employer to terminate your employment for a temporary absence from work due to illness; however, what is considered ‘temporary’ may depend on the circumstances.

Can an employer refuse to accept an employee back into the workplace after a period of illness even if the person has a doctor’s letter of fitness for work?

Generally, an employer cannot refuse to allow an employee back to work if the employee has been cleared by a doctor as being able to perform all his or her pre-injury or illness duties. However, there may be circumstances in which this refusal is justified, such as if a doctor clears the employee for particular restricted duties and those duties are not available or suitable, or if the position is no longer available.
If your employer refuses you permission to return on the basis suggested by your doctor, try to explore the employer’s reasons. For example, the employer may be genuinely concerned about your fitness to return to work. In some instances, a doctor’s certificate may not adequately address the specific job requirements or the doctor may not have fully understood the nature of duties available at your place of work.

What rights do I have when my employer cites occupational health and safety concerns as reason for why I cannot stay in my usual role e.g. I may injure myself or cause injury to others due to unsteadiness?

The employer may have not only the right but the responsibility to change your role if there are safety issues. You also have a responsibility to protect your safety and the safety of others, which may include changing your role or duties. However, employers should not use this type of argument as a pretext to discriminate against you. You may be able to show that there are no safety issues and resist the change.

What fitness for work assessments can my current employer ask of me? Can my employer make me see the company doctor or undergo other health assessments? Have I a right to refuse?

It will depend on your employment contract, the employer’s policies, any legislation which applies to your employment, and the reason for the assessment. For example, a job-related health assessment may be justified and lawful, particularly (but not only) if it is also a requirement for employees in similar jobs.

It may also be lawful for your employer to ask you to see a doctor if your work is being affected by your MS, but you have refused to explain what is happening or are returning to work after an illness-related absence. However, unless there is a statutory obligation on you to go to a doctor, your employer can’t force you to see their doctor.

Can I claim for work-related stress resulting in a relapse of MS?

Yes, it can be shown that your employment was a significant contributing factor to your MS-related stress. It is basically a medico-legal question, so speak to your doctor and a lawyer.

I had an accident at work and was subsequently diagnosed with MS. I am claiming for loss of income and medical expenses. Before the accident, I was healthy and had no sickness. Will I be covered under workers compensation?

If your employment was the significant contributing factor to the accident occurring then you will be paid workers compensation in respect of the injury sustained and the incapacity arising from that injury. However, you will not be paid any workers compensation in respect of MS or the incapacity or medical expenses that relate to the condition, if it wasn’t work related.

I had an accident at work because I was having a relapse of MS. My supervisor says I am not covered by workers compensation because she had told me I should go home. Is she correct?

No, irrespective of whether or not you were told to go home, if you had an accident at work you are covered for workers compensation, even it was related to your MS symptoms.

Will I be covered by workers compensation if I don’t disclose I have MS and have an accident whilst driving or operating machinery?

If you have an accident at work and suffer injuries, you are eligible for workers compensation benefits. However, if you fail to disclose a pre-existing condition, you may be ineligible to receive workers compensation benefits. It depends on the state or territory in which you work.

- In Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, the legislation enables a claim to be declined if the Applicant wilfully and falsely represented at the time of commencing employment that he/she did not suffer from a pre-existing injury or illness. However, it would be up to the workers compensation insurer to prove that your injuries are related to your pre-existing MS.

- In New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory, the legislation does not contain any provisions specifically about the denial of liability in respect of an Applicant who has failed to disclose any pre-existing injury or illness at the time of commencing employment.
Financial and legal matters

If I undergo a medical assessment for superannuation purposes, can my superannuation provider disclose I have MS to my employer?

Not generally without your consent. An insurer or superannuation trustee can only disclose sensitive personal information about you (including information about your MS) to your employer, without your consent, if the disclosure is directly related to the primary purpose of the collection of that information. If the disclosure of MS to your employer is not for such a purpose, then the insurer and/or the superannuation trustee must generally obtain your consent before doing so.

The insurer may request you undergo a medical examination as part of your application for obtaining insurance cover or as part of making a claim through your superannuation fund. The reason is most likely to assist the insurer to determine if you are eligible for insurance cover or to assess a disability insurance claim made by you.

Can I apply for salary continuance (also known as income protection) insurance?

Yes, if you are covered for it, for example, through your employer or superannuation fund. Some policies exclude pre-existing conditions but not many. Get legal advice.

Am I covered for a disability lump sum?

Most employment super funds include lump sums for total and permanent disability (TPD). Some workers are also covered for insurance lump sums paid for by their employer.

To be eligible for the TPD lump sum you will usually have to be permanently unfit to do your normal job or any other suitable work (given your education, training or experience) because of your MS symptoms and any other health problems.

You don’t have to be unfit for any work or part-time work, only suitable work that you have the skills to do.

If you have reached the point of having to stop work because of your MS symptoms, you may be a candidate. Get legal advice.

If I give up work, will I be able to get a disability pension?

Perhaps, depending on whether you could have continued working, your work capacity and your ability to meet Centrelink eligibility criteria, such as assets and income tests. You should speak to Centrelink or seek professional financial advice regarding this.

Can I access my superannuation if I leave work?

It depends on the terms of the particular superannuation scheme and factors including your age and your level of disability. You will need specialist advice and the first step will be to contact your superannuation fund.

I had to retire because of MS. I don’t get my superannuation allowance for six years and we can’t manage on my partner’s part-time income. I am told by Centrelink that I can’t get income support from the government because she works. What can I do?

Your superannuation fund’s rules may allow you to access your superannuation early. You might also be eligible for disability insurance benefits from your super fund, either as a lump sum or monthly payments. It is really important to get legal advice about this before claiming your superannuation early.

If I am not a union member, what resources are available to advise me on employment matters?

Some law firms specialise in employment law and may give you free legal advice. Some community legal centres specialise in disability issues. There are also paid legal services you can access. Contact the law society or law institute in your state or territory for more information.
Can legal practitioners take on an employment dispute on a ‘no win, no fee’ basis? Are they able to charge a percentage of the amount won? Is there a schedule of recommended fees?

Some lawyers may charge on a ‘no win, no fee’ basis; however, they cannot charge a percentage of the amount won. Make sure you find out what they will charge before you agree.

Can I apply for legal aid and will I have to pay court costs if I lose or win?

Yes, anyone can apply for legal aid but not everyone will qualify and not for every type of claim – the public money available is very limited. In some situations, if you win you will have to reimburse the legal aid provider for their costs – meaning that some of the damages awarded to you will be paid to the provider. If you lose, you may have to pay court expenses.

Where can I get more information about employment matters?

- **MS Connect™ (1800 042 138)** is our telephone information and support service. Our team of MS professionals is available to answer questions, provide you with resources and refer you to a variety of employment and legal support agencies.

- **MS Australia – ACT/NSW/Vic** provides access to a range of online MS publications and information about our programs and services: [www.msaustralia.org.au/actnswvic](http://www.msaustralia.org.au/actnswvic)

- **Australian Taxation Office Superannuation Helpline**: 13 10 20

- **Maurice Blackburn Lawyers’ disability help line** provides free legal advice for people with MS, their family and friends. Call 1800 196 050.

- **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)** has responsibility for investigating alleged infringements under current legislation. Call 1300 369 711 or visit the website: [www.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.hreoc.gov.au)

- **CRS Australia** delivers vocational rehabilitation services for people who have an injury, disability or health condition. Call 1800 624 824 or visit the website: [www.crsrehab.gov.au](http://www.crsrehab.gov.au)

- **Centrelink** is a government agency that delivers a range of employment and financial services. Call 13 10 21 or visit the website: [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

- **The Association of Competitive Employment (ACE)** is the peak body for open employment services to people with disabilities across Australia: [www.acenational.org.au](http://www.acenational.org.au)


MS Australia – ACT/NSW/Vic would like to acknowledge the contribution of John Berrill, Maurice Blackburn Pty Ltd, for his assistance in reviewing and developing the content of this information sheet.

For information about MS and MS Australia – ACT/NSW/VIC services:

Phone MS Connect™: 1800 042 138

Email: msconnect@msaustralia.org.au


Disclaimer: Information contained in this fact sheet, prepared by Multiple Sclerosis Limited, is intended to provide useful and accurate information of a general nature for the reader but is not intended to be a substitute for legal or medical advice. Multiple Sclerosis Limited is not recommending medical or legal advice and readers must seek their own medical or legal advice as may be appropriate. Printing and photocopying this publication in its original form is permitted for educational purposes only. Reproduction in any other form without written permission is prohibited.
Chronic Disease Management Plan

People with a chronic medical condition may be able to get Medicare benefits to cover allied health services that help manage their condition.

If you have a chronic medical condition, your doctor may suggest a GP Management Plan. If you need treatment from two or more health professionals, your doctor may also put a Team Care Arrangements plan in place for you.

A GP Management Plan is a plan of action agreed between you and your GP. It identifies your health care needs, sets out the services to be provided by your GP and lists the actions that you need to take.

A Team Care Arrangements plan lets your doctor work with, and refer you to, at least two other health professionals who will provide treatment or services to you.

You may be eligible for Medicare benefits for specific allied health services if your doctor prepares both types of plans for you.

Chronic medical condition

A 'chronic medical condition' is one that has been, or is likely to be, present for at least six months or is terminal.

The Department of Health website[1] has more information on chronic disease management Medicare items and the Medicare Benefits Schedule[2].

Eligibility

Anyone with a chronic or terminal medical condition can have a GP Management Plan in place.

More information

Contact your doctor to find out more about chronic disease management.

Link references


Sickness Allowance

A payment for people aged 22 years or more but under Age Pension age who temporarily cannot work or study because of an injury or illness.

Disability Champion Paul’s story
In this Disability Champion video[^1], Paul talks to us about how working part time has helped him gain new skills, friends and confidence.

Eligibility basics

- aged 22 years or more and have a job, or
- aged 22 years or more and getting ABSTUDY as a full-time student, or
- aged 25 years or more and getting Austudy as a full-time student
- under Age Pension age and meet an income and assets test

Eligibility and payment rates

Residence requirements for Sickness Allowance
To be eligible for Sickness Allowance you must satisfy residence requirements. You must:

- be an Australian resident[^4], and
- continue to meet the residence requirements for as long as you get this payment

You must also meet residence requirements on the day you lodge your claim. Generally you will need to be physically present in Australia on the day you lodge your claim.

Newly arrived residents[^5] generally have a 104 week waiting period, with some exemptions.

If you are not an Australian resident, but arrived in Australia on a New Zealand passport after 26 February 2001 and have lived here continuously for at least 10 years since 26 February 2001, you may qualify for payment of Sickness Allowance for up to 6 months. If you qualify for payment under this exemption, you will not need to serve the 104 week newly arrived resident’s waiting period.

Other benefits while receiving Sickness Allowance
If you qualify for Sickness Allowance, you may be entitled to other payments and benefits, such as:

- ABSTUDY$^{[6]}$
- Austudy$^{[7]}$
- Centrepay$^{[8]}$
- Clean Energy Advance$^{[9]}$
- Clean Energy Supplement$^{[10]}$
- Health Care Card$^{[11]}$
- Income Support Bonus$^{[12]}$
- Pharmaceutical Allowance$^{[13]}$
- Rent Assistance$^{[14]}$
- Telephone Allowance$^{[15]}$

Services and programs

You can use a number of Australian Government services and programs, including:

- Disability Employment Services$^{[18]}$
- Social work services$^{[19]}$

Claiming

1. register an intent to claim
2. complete your forms
3. complete the supporting documentation
4. submit your claim
5. we assess your claim and let you know the outcome

Claim$^{[20]}$

Link references

1. http://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=R8VCQyfOxs&list=PL3zxsVzCpwkX5u9tpkJJ1_u9vf_5__VT&index=6
Mobility Allowance

Help for people with disability, illness or injury who cannot use public transport without substantial assistance and participate in approved activities.

Eligibility basics

- aged 16 or more
- cannot use public transport without substantial assistance because of a disability, illness, or injury
- need to travel to and from your home to look for work, do paid or voluntary work, or participate in study or training

Eligibility & payment rates

Eligibility for Mobility Allowance

You may be eligible for Mobility Allowance if you:

- are aged 16 or over, and
- cannot use public transport without substantial assistance because of disability, illness, or injury, and
- need to travel to and from your home to look for work, do paid work or voluntary work for a charitable, welfare or community organisation, or participate in study or training. Study or training can include secondary school, tertiary studies, trade and vocational courses

You can still qualify for Mobility Allowance if there is no public transport where you live.

You cannot get Mobility Allowance if you are receiving a funded package of support from the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Eligibility for the standard rate of Mobility Allowance

To be eligible for the standard rate of Mobility Allowance, you must also:

- be undertaking vocational training, voluntary work, paid work, independent-living or life skills training or any combination of these for at least 32 hours every four weeks on a continuing basis, or
- have an agreement to look for work through an Employment Services Provider such as Job Services Australia or Disability Employment Services, or
- be participating in a Disability Employment Service - Disability Management Service, or
• be receiving Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance or Austudy and satisfy the activity test requirements associated with these payments

Eligibility for the higher rate of Mobility Allowance

You may be eligible for the higher rate of Mobility Allowance if you are:

• receiving Disability Support Pension, Parenting Payment, Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance (job seeker), and
• working for at least 15 hours a week on wages that are at, or above, the relevant minimum wage, or
• undertaking job-search activities for work of at least 15 hours a week on wages that are at, or above, the relevant minimum wage, under an Employment Pathway Plan or agreement with an Employment Services Provider such as Job Services Australia or Disability Employment Services, or
• working for at least 15 hours a week on productivity-based wages under the Supported Wage System

Cars

You can qualify for Mobility Allowance if you have a Goods and Services Tax (GST) exemption on a car.

You cannot qualify for Mobility Allowance if you have a car from the Department of Veterans’ Affairs under the Vehicle Assistance Scheme.

Finishing employment or training

If you finish your employment, training or job search agreement with your provider, but still meet the other eligibility requirements, you may still receive Mobility Allowance for another 12 weeks.

Claiming Mobility Allowance

Find out more about Claiming Mobility Allowance

Payment rates for Mobility Allowance

Mobility Allowance payment rates are reviewed annually and updated on 1 January each year. Mobility Allowance payments are not taxed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of rate</th>
<th>Payment rate per fortnight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard rate</td>
<td>$89.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher rate</td>
<td>$124.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Income and assets tests for Mobility Allowance
You do not have to meet income or assets tests to qualify for Mobility Allowance.

**Residence requirements for Mobility Allowance**

To be eligible for Mobility Allowance you must satisfy residence requirements. You must:

- be an **Australian resident**
- be physically present in Australia on the day you lodge your claim, and
- continue to meet the residence requirements for as long as you get this payment

** Newly arrived residents ** generally have a 104 week waiting period, with some exemptions.

**Other benefits while receiving Mobility Allowance**

If you qualify for Mobility Allowance, you may be entitled to other payments and services, such as:

- Bereavement Payment
- Centrelink online accounts
- Dad and Partner Pay
- Family Tax Benefit
- Parenting Payment

You may be entitled to a Health Care Card while you are receiving Mobility Allowance.

**Claiming**

Once you have read about eligibility the next steps are:

1. read the conditions for claiming
2. register an intent to claim
3. complete your forms
4. provide the supporting documentation
5. submit your claim
6. we will assess your claim and let you know the outcome

**Claim**

This information is intended only as a guide to payments and services. It’s your responsibility to decide if you wish to apply for a payment and to make an application, with regard to your particular circumstances. This information was printed on Friday 7 February 2014 from http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/mobility-allowance and based on the selections made, may not include all of the information on this topic.
Medical Cooling Concession

The Medical Cooling Concession provides a 17.5 per cent discount on summer electricity costs for cardholders where a member of the family has a medical condition that affects the body's ability to regulate temperature.

There are many qualifying conditions which include:
- multiple sclerosis
- lymphoedema
- Parkinson's disease
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis
- post polio syndrome/poliomyelitis
- motor neurone disease.

This concession is available from 1 November to 30 April each year and applications are accepted throughout the year. The concession is given in addition to the Annual Electricity Concession.

Eligibility

You must hold at least one of the following concession cards:
- Pensioner Concession Card
- Health Care Card
- DVA Gold Card

Holders of a Health Care Card for Carer Allowance and Foster Care issued in the name of the child are not eligible. Holders of Veterans' Affairs Gold Cards marked 'Dependent' are not eligible.
Managing Fatigue in the Workplace

Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis (MS), and can often be the most difficult symptom to live with. It is also one of the most common reasons why people with MS stop working (MSIF Survey on Employment and MS, 2010). Explaining fatigue to colleagues can also be difficult, as it is not a symptom that can be easily seen, and can be difficult for others to understand. This information sheet provides an overview of fatigue in MS, and some strategies that can assist people to manage fatigue in the workplace.

How is fatigue in MS different to other types of fatigue?

**Ordinary fatigue** is the tired feeling everyone experiences after an excessively busy day or a lack of sleep. It is the type of fatigue that is usually managed by rest and a good night’s sleep. Ordinary fatigue is quite different to the fatigue experienced in MS.

**Fatigue associated with MS** is a direct result of damage to the central nervous system. It usually occurs more rapidly, lasts longer and takes more time to recover from than ordinary fatigue. As with other symptoms of MS, the effects of fatigue vary from person to person, and levels of fatigue are often very unpredictable. Types of MS fatigue include:

- **Neuromuscular fatigue** is a failure of damaged nerves to conduct messages to muscles during repetitive or prolonged activity, and usually resolves with short rest. It occurs in specific muscle groups, like the hands after typing, or legs when walking or standing.
- **Lassitude fatigue** is described as an overwhelming sense of tiredness that can occur at any time of the day without warning. Lassitude fatigue can occur for no apparent reason or after relatively mild exertion, such as a short period of walking, writing or reading, and does not necessarily resolve after rest.

Other factors that can contribute to fatigue are warm ambient temperatures (people with MS can often be sensitive to heat), stress, and sleep disturbance. These factors, in conjunction with MS-fatigue, can also cause a temporary worsening of other MS symptoms, such as muscle weakness, visual disturbances, and difficulties with concentrating.

Strategies to manage fatigue at work:

- **Balance activity with rest.** If working in an active role, balance heavy tasks with regular rest breaks throughout the day and week. If working in a sedentary role, such as an office environment, take short breaks every 30-45 mins to stretch your muscles and give your eyes a rest from the computer screen. Think about locations in your workplace where you can take a good physical and cognitive rest break.
- **Rearrange your work environment.** Move most frequently used items to within easy reaching distance. Use lightweight tools and equipment where possible.
- **Plan your day.** Keep organised, use electronic reminders, and prioritise your ‘to do’ tasks. Consider performing tasks with a higher physical or cognitive demand at the time of day when you are least fatigued. Perform all printing/copying tasks at once to reduce the number of trips to the photocopier.
- **Look at your travel.** Think about the most time and energy efficient way of commuting to and from work to conserve your energy for the weekday.
- **Manage heat sensitivity.** Even small increases in temperature can increase a person’s fatigue. Plan to work outdoors in the cooler part of the day, consider wearing cooling attire, keep hydrated, use desk fans, and park undercover. You may also want to explore the possibility of moving your workstation to a cooler part of the building.
- **Manage mobility issues.** Explore the possibility of having a designated car park close to the work building, having a printer on the desk, or moving to a workstation closer to staff amenities. Use trolleys where possible to avoid the need to carry items, take the lift instead of stairs to conserve energy, and correspond with colleagues by phone or email to reduce the frequency of trips required.
- **Assess your hours.** Your employer may be flexible with start and finish times so you may avoid working during most fatiguing times of the day. Starting earlier or later may also help you to avoid peak hour traffic times. If you work part-time, take your day off in the middle of the week to break up your week. You may also be able to negotiate working from home arrangements for part of the working week.