



Preparing for your Neurologist Appointment

Being Prepared

Your appointments with your neurologist may be few and far between, and you may not have very long to ask a lot of questions.

- Make the most of your appointment. Most neurologists appreciate you coming to an appointment with some questions. If you are unsure ask them for their suggestions on the best way to have questions answered.
- Ask questions and seek clarification if you have not fully understood the answer
- Prepare your questions in advance of your appointment, write them down as they come to you
- Take a friend or family member with you, this will assist in recalling the answers after the appointment, they might even write for you while you listen.
- Use this checklist to help you think through things you want to discuss.

▪ **My appointment date and time**

If you use this checklist for each appointment you will have a thorough record of your disease activity over time. Include the date and time of your appointments to aid this process.

There are apps that can also assist you to track your symptoms

▪ **New symptoms that may be caused by multiple sclerosis:**

Not everything you experience will be due to your multiple sclerosis, however writing down the new symptoms you are experiencing will assist your neurologist to advise you on how best to manage the particular symptom. They won't know unless you tell them. A neurologist will not ask specifically about each possible symptom, they rely on you telling them what you're experiencing

▪ **Old symptoms which have come back or become worse:**

Occasionally old symptoms will reappear or existing symptoms will worsen. There are many reasons why this might occur. Discussing these changes with your neurologist will give them some indication of how your disease is impacting your life and will guide them in regard to management strategies

▪ **Any new MRI or lab results to discuss:**

If you have had any tests prior to your appointment it is helpful to ask for the results.

Often the results alone will only form part of the picture, ask your neurologist what they're looking for.

▪ **Any major life changes to share:**

Particularly at the start of your journey with multiple sclerosis, disease activity can be very active. This should settle. However, having numerous sick days and feeling very unwell can cause you to make changes that can have an impact later on. Before you make any major life changes such as changing jobs, stopping work or moving house, seek advice. Call MS Connect on 1800 042 138 to discuss the options and reasons for any changes you are considering.

▪ **Any questions about medications:**

Medications are available to modify the disease course (RRMS) or manage the symptoms of multiple sclerosis. Disease modifying treatments act as an insurance policy, as they work to prevent relapses. But they have side effects. If you are struggling with the medications you have been prescribed, it is important to talk about this with your neurologist. No matter what form of multiple sclerosis you are experiencing, your Neurologist needs to know about all medications you are taking, including prescribed, over the counter and herbal preparations as there can be interactions between certain products that reduce the efficacy of medications. Remember to ask about any prescriptions that you require.

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- **Between appointments:**
Most clinics have a contact point for questions and concerns between appointments and it is important to work out a strategy with your neurologist. Do you call them? Do you go to the emergency department? Is there a clinic nurse you can contact? Remember you can call MS Connect but MS Connect is not an emergency service and discussing a strategy with your neurologist will be helpful.

- **Contact between Neurologist and GP:**
For most GP's, they will have minimal experience with patients living with multiple sclerosis. A good GP is one who is willing to learn with you. Establishing what information will be shared between your neurologist and your GP can be helpful. Some neurologists will be happy to provide updates to your GP, others will expect you to pass on information.

- **What else could I be doing to help my MS?**
Maintaining health and wellness is vital for people living with chronic health conditions.

MS endorses a holistic approach to living a healthy lifestyle that includes attention to fatigue management, nutrition, physical activity and social connections.

Discuss with your neurologist the strategies they feel would assist your particular symptom mix.

They might suggest your GP write up a [Chronic Disease Management Plan](#) to provide you with opportunities to connect with approved allied health.

MS has a wide range of programs and recordings where you can learn more about lifestyle approaches to assist in managing symptoms and living well. Check out the [education programs](#) on offer

- **Questions I have about my multiple sclerosis:**
If you use this checklist to write down your concerns and questions between appointments, you can re-read it prior to your appointment and determine what to prioritise in your conversation with your neurologist. Copy it and show it to your neurologist; they might make notes, or you or your supporter might make notes. You might even ask to record the conversation using a recording device to refer to afterwards.
- **Goal and Plan for 6 months:**
Given your appointments might be infrequent, it is wise to talk about what you could be doing in the intervening period until your next appointment. This conversation may initiate referrals to other services such as a continence clinic, a physiotherapist or a psychologist for support

However you choose to use this checklist, ensure that you don't leave your appointment without asking the questions that were concerning you.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

If you would like any support to prepare for your appointment, we're here to help. Our MS Connect team are available from Monday to Friday, from 8.30am to 5pm.

Please **contact MS Connect:**

8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

T Freecall 1800 042 138

E msconnect@ms.org.au



CHECKLIST

Preparing for your neurologist appointment

Appointment Time		Date	
Symptoms New Eg. Buzzing in ears Rushing to the bathroom Intimacy issues Increased fatigue Previous symptoms – worse / returned			
MRI or test results			
Major Life changes			
Medications Questions Scripts			
Between Appointments Who can I call? What will be communicated to my GP?		Name: Phone: Email:	
What else could I be doing to help my MS? Eg. Physio Nutrition Counselling			
Goal and plan for next 6 months			
Other Questions or Discussion Points			

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This checklist was developed in partnership with MS Advisory Committee – Victoria

Please contact MS for more information:

MS Connect™: 1800 042 138

Email: msconnect@ms.org.au

Web: www.ms.org.au