WORLD MS DAY

World MS Day will once again take place on 30 May. It is a chance for the MS community internationally to connect, raise awareness and share knowledge of life with multiple sclerosis.

This year, a three year theme has been launched called ‘MS Connections’ which is all about community connection, self-connection and connections to quality care. In Australia, for World MS Day 2020 we will be focusing on self-care.

For the week of World MS Day (25 – 30 May) we will ask the MS community to share self-care tips on our social channels, host virtual events for our community and raise awareness of multiple sclerosis. Visit [www.ms.org.au/world-ms-day](http://www.ms.org.au/world-ms-day) for ways you can get involved.

Have you considered applying for our MS GO FOR GOLD Scholarships

The MS Go for Gold Scholarships enable people living with multiple sclerosis to fulfil a dream or pursue a personal goal that otherwise may be out of reach.

Maybe you want to explore your creative side and do some art or learn a new hobby, further your education, change careers or kickstart a business idea, or maybe you’re interested in living well by participating in wellbeing activities or purchasing equipment that will have a positive impact on your daily life.

As Lydia, a past recipient of the MS Go for Gold Scholarship says, “the Go for Gold Scholarship doesn’t have to be an extravagant dream. It can be for everyday wishes…my dream was to study Italian.”

No project, dream, goal, business idea or hobby is too big or too small. People have applied for many different reasons; from needing equipment to help them clean their house so they can spend more time with their family, to funding a course to help kickstart their business idea.

We hear a lot from the MS community that they didn’t apply for an MS Go for Gold Scholarship because they thought someone else may need this support more. You are just as deserving as anyone else. The MS Go for Gold Scholarships are available to help you live well with MS and achieve something you may not have otherwise achieved.

Applications for the 2020 MS Go for Gold Scholarships open on 10 June. To find out more, and to see what previous recipients have used an MS Go for Gold Scholarships for, visit our website [www.ms.org.au/go-for-gold](http://www.ms.org.au/go-for-gold)
Telehealth services launched

Telehealth is a virtual way you can access important health services that typically would be delivered face-to-face. Usually it involves either a phone call or a videocall with your health professional to help you maintain your health and wellbeing, from the comfort of your own home.

All Telehealth consultations are confidential and the technology used to facilitate the session is secure and able to protect your privacy.

To access Telehealth, all you need is a phone or internet connection and a device such as a computer, tablet or mobile phone.

We have just launched a range of services you can access via Telehealth including:

• Physiotherapy
• Occupational Therapy (OT)
• Continence Assessments
• Exercise Physiology

You can access these services with your existing NDIS funding so we can support you to achieve your health goals and be as independent as possible in the community. To find out more contact us on 1800 042 138 or msconnect@ms.org.au

Getting assistance from our Support Coordinators

The NDIA have recently made changes to support NDIS participants during COVID-19, making it easier for people to access Support Coordination by using their Core Supports funding. This means that if you do not have Support Coordination in your current NDIS plan and you would like support from one of our Support Coordinators – you can now use your Core Supports funding for Support Coordination.

MS Support Coordinators empower you to make your NDIS plan active. They work with you in partnership to make sure your plan works well for you, following your directions on how you want to manage your plan and achieve your goals.

We have an experienced team of Support Coordinators who can assist you to implement your NDIS plan and support you when you need it.

To find out more please contact us on 1800 042 138 or email msconnect@ms.org.au
The MS Nurse Advisors would like to remind you……

It’s not too late to have your flu vaccination.

As the weather gets colder, the topic of influenza vaccination comes up. Influenza, commonly known as ‘the flu’, can be caught at any time of year however it is more common in the colder months, from April to October and usually peaks in August. The annual flu vaccine is developed each year to offer protection against the most common circulating flu strains, and usually becomes available in Australia in late April or May. The vaccination gives protection for up to 12 months so if you haven’t had your vaccination yet, you will still benefit from the protection of the vaccine.

The MS Nurse Advisors often receive many questions about the flu and flu vaccination so we will try and answer some of them here:

Q. Isn’t getting the flu just like having a cold?
No, the flu is a highly contagious respiratory disease which can cause serious illness or even death. While many people have manageable symptoms, many others are hospitalised. In Australia in 2017; 1,200 people died in one flu season.

Q. Is it safe to have the flu vaccine if you have multiple sclerosis?
Yes, it is safe to have the flu vaccine and highly recommended. The Australian Health Department recommends flu vaccination to anyone over 6 months of age and even more so if you are living with a chronic neurological condition such as multiple sclerosis. MS Neurologists and MS Australia also recommend people living with multiple sclerosis are vaccinated against the flu as the infection could cause serious illness and possible relapse which may lead to disease progression. For those whose health may be already fragile, a bout of the flu could be devastating.

Q. I’m on a disease modifying therapy for multiple sclerosis, does this mean the flu vaccination won’t work?
It is still important to be vaccinated. Studies have shown that the flu vaccine is still effective with all the current therapies for multiple sclerosis. The timing of the vaccine may be important with some of the ‘pulsed’ therapies such as Lemtrada, Ocrevus and Mavenclad depending on when the last dosing has been given. Please discuss with your clinical team the best time to have your vaccination if you are on one of these therapies.

Q. Can the flu vaccine give you the flu?
No. The flu vaccine is an inactivated vaccine. It does not contain any live virus which can cause the flu. Some flu vaccines are adjuvant which means that may contain other particles to boost the immune response. The adjuvant vaccines are recommended for people over 65, who may not respond so well to vaccination due to their older immune system.

Some people may come down with a flu or cold after receiving the flu shot, but as it takes one to two weeks for the vaccine to take effect, it is more likely to be coincidence.

Q. What are the side effects of the flu vaccination?
The most common side effects are a mild rise in temperature, tiredness, and body aches for 24 to 48hours after the injection. There may also be some redness and or swelling at the injection site. Rest, hydration, and analgesics such as paracetamol usually provides effective relief from any adverse effects.

Q. Does the flu vaccination protect me against COVID-19?
No, the flu vaccination does not protect you against COVID-19 as they are different viruses and a vaccination for COVID-19 hasn’t been developed yet.

Q. Should my carer and other family members receive the flu vaccine?
Yes. It is important for as many people in the community as possible to be immunised against the flu virus to prevent the disease being widespread, but particularly important for those who are in frequent contact with a person who may be more vulnerable to the effects of influenza to be vaccinated.

These are just the answers to some of the more common questions we receive about the flu vaccination, if you still have questions, ask your GP or neurologist, or call MS Connect on 1800 042 138 and speak with one of the MS Nurse Advisors.
National Volunteers Week was May 18 – 24. It is an important annual celebration to recognise and thank all of our generous volunteers who donate their time, skills and knowledge to help others living with multiple sclerosis. We celebrated our volunteers (virtually) for all that they do for the MS community.

Over the last year:
• 140 presentations given by 54 MS Ambassadors
• 68,157 hours were volunteered at MS Community Shops with 43,653 items donated to shops across the country
• 824 people spent 4,500 hours volunteering at MS events
• 405 people volunteered for the Community Visitors Scheme through MSL, totalling 12,459 visits to older people in the community needing friendship and connection

Over 1,600 people volunteered their time to support people living with MS last year. This may be through hosting a Peer Support group online to serving customers at the MS Community Shops, to helping out at events or speaking in the community to raise awareness of multiple sclerosis. There are so many ways our volunteers support us and we thank each and every one of them. Here are a few of our team members showing their appreciation.

A story from an unsung hero… one of indefatigable love

Every year more than 600 people are diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. It is a diagnosis that often hits people extremely hard. It can also be at times, devastating. This disease presents a challenge that can feel for some, at times, unsurmountable.

It was many years ago when Susan had to face this stark reality. She was working at Woolworths and was looking forward to starting a family with the love of her life, Tim. But, the reality of her health situation somewhat changed this course.

Susan was on a courageous and determined path. She dedicated herself to learn more about multiple sclerosis and how she could help others in a similar situation to herself. “I find that in life if you help others you get much more returned to you.” Susan became a proud MS Peer Support Volunteer.

She also decided to leave a legacy of love to Multiple Sclerosis Limited (MSL) via a Gift in her Will. Susan tells us that she has benefitted from many of the services that MS provides. She has accessed expert advice and support for herself and her family. The opportunity that MS offers to help others is something that empowers her and keeps her strong. “I don’t feel alone… I know MS and my family are behind me all the way.”

“Why have I decided to leave a legacy of love to Multiple Sclerosis Limited? I want to be part of the future of MS. and contribute so they will have the resources to continue to help and support people with multiple sclerosis. It is very important that ‘no one has to face MS alone, now or in the future’.”

“I am thrilled that I am giving my money to a worthy cause. I am leaving a legacy that will help others with multiple sclerosis. This was a very easy decision as it is one more way that I can be useful and give back to my community. I would encourage others to do so.”

View Susan’s story at: https://mymslegacy.org.au/supporters-like-you/susan/ For further information visit our website: https://mymslegacy.org.au or call 1800 443 867 (1800 GIFTMS ) to speak with Laura Henschke or Michael Knox.
STAYING INFORMED

Facebook, Google, Instagram, WhatsApp, friends, family, neighbours, strangers on the bus, we get information and advice from all sorts of places, sometimes sought, sometimes offered without us even asking. And have you found that everyone’s opinion is different?

There is a risk that we’ll seek out opinions until we hear one that matches what we already believe, and that doesn’t necessarily challenge our thinking, and sometimes it’s not even factual it’s just comfortable.

Knowledge is not always convenient and sometimes knowing the facts mean we might have to change what we are doing, what we think or how we behave. But for people living with multiple sclerosis, finding reliable information, no matter how challenging, will ensure a better outcome, and a greater chance of living well. Multiple Sclerosis is likely to have an impact on all areas of your life, and it will perhaps have a different impact at different times depending on your life stage, circumstances or even your age.

Establishing your source of good and reliable information is important. MS works hard to be that source of information that is based on evidence. It is a valuable exercise to periodically check back in with the source of information and have a look at new podcasts, webinar recordings in the webinar library or programs on our website https://www.ms.org.au

When things change, know we are working really hard to keep you up to date. When something new comes up for you, we are likely to already have some information available for you when you need it. From managing symptoms to financial and legal matters, we try hard to have information available when you need it. When it comes to speaking with someone in person, our MS Connect Team, MS Nurse Advisors and MS Social Work Advisors are a wealth of current and relevant information.

Some useful pages to bookmark include:

- Upcoming MS Education Programs - https://www.ms.org.au/support-services/education/ms-education-programs.aspx

Contact MS Connect on 1800 042 138 or msconnect@ms.org.au for further information or for support. Multiple Sclerosis is here so you are not alone.

Current telegroups:

- **Under 30s Telegroup** First Friday of every month, 12.30pm – 1.30pm
- **Men’s support group** First Thursday of the month – 1.30pm to 2.30pm
  Last Tuesday of the month – 12pm – 1pm
- **Women’s support group** Fourth Monday of the month – 12.30pm to 1.30pm
- **Women in 40 to 64 group** Third Tuesday of the month – 1.30pm to 2.30pm
- **Over 65’s group** First Tuesday of the month – 10.30am – 11.30am
- **After hours group for working people** Second Wednesday of the month – 7.00pm to 8.00pm
- **Family and friends telegroup** First Tuesday of the month – 7.30pm to 8.30pm
- **General support groups** Second Monday of the month – 7.00pm to 8.00pm
  Second Tuesday of the month – 7.00pm to 8.00pm
- **Mums with MS support group** Second Tuesday of the month – 1.00pm to 2.00pm

*Please note due to the implications of COVID-19 Face-to-Face Peer Support Groups are cancelled until further notice, but we encourage you to contact MS Connect on 1800 042 138 between 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday or email msconnect@ms.org.au to join one of our groups online or over the phone.
NDIS Q and A
Understanding NDIS can be a real hurdle to overcome. Even the language and titles of packages, planners, local area coordinators and support coordinators is mind boggling and easily overwhelming. This Q and A is for you if you need any help navigating the NDIS, have had any changes in NDIS, have concerns about your packages or any questions at all. Our NDIS team will be there in the virtual space to answer any of your questions. See them there at 10:00am on the 2 June 2020.

Finances
Managing finances and preparing for the future is challenging at the best of times, however keeping it together financially in just one the many challenges during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Nicola is our go to finance expert to help guide you with practical and useful strategies for everyday financial management and give you tips and strategies for taking control. Nicola will be available 9 June 2020 at 11:00am - 12 midday.

Medications update
On 15 June 2020 at 10:30 to11:30am we will be bringing you all the latest on medications and medication management in MS via webinar. There has been so many questions about MS medications during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also a deluge of new information, new research and new ways of doing things. Get the information you need to stay in control.

Building healthy relationships with Helen Diamond
Are your relationships strained due to a little too much isolation time? Or are you just looking for ways to make the good partnership you have even better? Then jump into our webinar with Helen. Helen is a counsellor who works in rural health. For this webinar she is going to share her wisdom on building better relationships with you and your partner. She will cover lots of helpful information, including understanding through love languages. Do you show love by giving gifts or telling people in words? Or are you a person who shows that they love someone by acts of service, such as filling the car up with petrol or cooking dinner? Understanding the ways we show and give love can really help build positive relationships. And if you already know this, how great is it be reminded again! Helen’s webinar is 18 June from 10:00am – 11:00am.
You can also catch up with her on a podcast via the MS website library https://www.ms.org.au/support-services/education/ms-education-programs.aspx

Accessing our webinars
To those who have conquered the many new ways of communicating in the virtual space, you can be congratulated as awesome. It isn't always easy, and sometimes just the thought of it can be overwhelming. We are working on making access to our great webinars even simpler, but for now if you are not familiar with our webinars, it's easy and we are happy to help.

We would love you join us, so please let us know if there are any barriers that we can help you overcome. You can call us at MS connect 1800 042 138, web chat, online enquiry form or email msconnect@ms.org.au

Have a safe and happy June, and stay warm.
MS Team