Welcome to today’s webinar:
Overview of Common MS Symptoms

Your Presenter is Bridie Phillips
Your Facilitator is Andrea Salmon

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional custodians past and present on whose lands we meet today.
We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and the relationship of Aboriginal people to country and respect the cultural authority of the elders in each community.
Introduction to Presenter

Bridie Phillips is a Registered Nurse and has committed the last 14 years to community health. Bridie currently works for MS as a Nurse Advisor.

The MS Nurse Advisor service is available for clients, carers, family members and health professionals who may have queries about multiple sclerosis, symptoms, medications and general wellbeing.

If you would like to speak with an MS Nurse Advisor, contact MS Connect on 1800 042 138. MS Nurse Advisor appointments are available by phone, Skype and Facetime.
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Live Well

Lifestyle Approaches

Pharmaceutical management

Symptom management

MS Symptoms - The Facts

1. Symptoms vary from person to person
2. Symptoms can fluctuate and change
3. Not everyone experiences every symptom
4. Symptoms can be invisible: eg fatigue
5. There is interplay between symptoms
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MS symptoms

- **Cerebrum & cerebellum**
  - cognitive impairment
  - depression
  - coordination problems
  - tremor

- **Optic nerve**
  - Blurred or double vision, vision loss

- **Spinal cord**
  - weakness
  - spasticity (stiffness, painful spasms)
  - bowel / bladder problems
  - sexual problems

- **Brainstem**
  - vision problems
  - vertigo
  - speech disorders
  - swallowing disorders
  - sensory loss & pain

- **Other common symptoms**
  - fatigue
  - heat sensitivity

Interplay of Symptoms

- **SLEEP**
- **EXACERBATION OF PAIN**
- **MOOD COGNITIVE FOG**
- **DECREASED EXERCISE TOLERANCE**
- **FATIGUE**
Visual Problems

- Usually transient
- Medical review if ongoing
- Neuro-opthalmologist
- Referral to Vision Australia
- Consider the impact on driving

Physical symptoms

- Physiotherapy/Occupational therapy assessment
- Exercise
- Medical Management
- Aids, Equipment and Adaptations
Pain and Sensory Changes

- Medical review
- Combination of treatments
- Investigate causes and effects
- Medication
- Lifestyle Strategies

Heat Sensitivity

Temperature or heat intolerance occurs in MS and can make symptoms temporarily worse.

Temperature or heat intolerance can be managed by:

- Planning activities around the heat,
- use of cooling products,
- fans and airconditioning
Fatigue

“Fatigue feels like being weighed down, as if you are trying to walk up to your neck in a deep, muddy river in heavy, wet clothes carrying shopping bags full of rocks.”

Fatigue

• Pace activities
• Allow rest breaks
• Maintain cooler environments
• Exercise
• Hydration
• General Health checks
• Improve sleep quality
• Seek advice
Sleep disturbances

- Routine – including daylight, exercise during the day and wind down activities in the evening
- Caffeine intake (coffee, tea, chocolate, cola)
- Manage Other symptoms e.g. Bladder
- Appropriate Referral

Cognitive Change

- Seek advice
- Neuropsychological assessment
- Occupational Therapy Assessment
- Develop strategies
  - Diary
  - Reminders
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Continence Issues

- Seek advice
- Effective management is available
- Specialist health practitioner eg Continence Nurses and clinics
- Lifestyle changes
  - Exercise
  - Diet
  - Fluids

Changes in mood and emotions

- Dealing with a diagnosis of MS
- Mood changes
- Depression
- Seek support
Identifying a Relapse

A relapse is a relatively sudden episode of either new symptoms or a worsening of existing symptoms that continues for longer than 24 hours (i.e. not temporary) in the absence of a fever or other causes and is separated from a previous attack by at least 30 days.

A pseudo-relapse also referred to as a pseudo-exacerbation is usually a temporary symptom flare-up that has nothing to do with the course of your disease, but happens because something has aggravated your condition, like a fever, infection, or hot weather or during or after times of intense stress.

Managing Symptoms

**Prompt response** to change in symptoms or new symptoms that do not settle after 24 hours

**Seek advice** from GP/MS Clinic Nurse/MS patient support programmes/MS Nurse Advisor

**Notify** neurologist

**Present** to an emergency department if symptoms significant (a relapse might indicate a need for change of DMT or steroid therapy)

“**Do not be afraid to speak up**”
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Tracking Symptoms

Keep a symptom diary:
- when was new symptom experienced - what it is? Different to normal?
- current medications: what's worked and what hasn't?

For example: Saturday 5 June
“This week fuzziness in my leg has moved up to my arm. Had some pains in my hand also one day, but it has been mostly ok. It mostly feels like both arm and leg is slightly "weaker" and fuzzy compared to the left side. Must remember to mention to my MS Nurse on Tuesday.”

Consider using Symptom tracker Apps:
e.g., Symple Symptom tracker
or Flaredown

Where else can I get support?

GP: Chronic disease management plans to access allied health such as OT/SP/PT/Exercise physiology
Mental Health Plan to access psychologists/mental health support

NDIS: National Disability Insurance Scheme (under 65)
MAC: My Aged Care (over 65)

National Continence Help Line 1800 33 00 66 (8am-8pm)

MS Web page: Fact sheets on common symptoms
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Summary: A Network of Support

- Medical Management
- Network of professional support
- Management of Symptoms
- Health Promotion to Improve Quality of Life
- Continual Assessment & Reassessment

Questions

MS Connect
1800 042 138
msconnect@ms.org.au
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MS Connect

10 reasons to call us:
1. Up-to-date, evidence based information about multiple sclerosis
2. Expert advice on managing symptoms
3. Information about minimising the impact of multiple sclerosis
4. Support for people who are newly diagnosed
5. Information about treatment options
6. Education programs
7. Connections to other people living with multiple sclerosis
8. Referrals to appropriate services in your area
9. Extra support for you and your family
10. Respite options to give families short-term breaks

Peer Support

- 1:1 Phone Support
- Face to Face groups - (temporarily converted to Telegroups)
  - 2 in the ACT
  - 11 in Tasmania
  - 17 in NSW
  - 42 in Vic
- Telegroups
  - Currently running 12 telegroups
- Facebook groups
  - 3 groups – for people living with MS
  - for carers
  - for young carers – up to 25 years of age
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Get Your Act Together

• Online Tool – designed to help you better manage your multiple sclerosis symptoms

• Focuses on some of the common symptoms of MS – emotions, fatigue, continence, cognition, pain and heat sensitivity

• Designed for people living in the ACT but includes useful information for all people living with MS

• Complete the tool to receive a personalized report (listing services, resources, tips etc)

Visit www.ms.org.au and search Get Your Act Together

Employment Support Services

The MS Employment Support Service (ESS) is the only MS specialist employment service for people living with multiple sclerosis in Australia that can help you succeed at work, whether that is staying in your current job or finding new employment.

Contact MS Connect for more information on free call 1800 042 138.
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Registered NDIS Provider

MS is a registered NDIS provider in NSW, ACT, Vic and Tas and is approved to provide:

(Pls note: Face to face services/programs have been either converted to online programs or postponed)

- Assistance with ‘Access Request Forms’, Access rejections and pre-planning
- Support Coordination – assistance to help make your plan active
- Plan Management
- Short term accommodation (Vic)
- Group activities – yoga, dance for health, exercise (NSW)
- Exercise Physiology (NSW)
- Specialist Continence Assessment (Vic)
- Occupational Therapy (NSW and Vic)
- Physiotherapy (NSW)

Want to learn more?
Please call MS Connect 1800 042 138

My Aged Care

My Aged Care is an Australian Government initiative, website and phone line to help you find about aged care services.

Available to people who are 65 years of age and over.

Why Contact My Aged Care?

- Information
- Assistance in mapping out your needs
- An assessment for further supports

Phone: 1800 200 422 Free call Australia wide

Website: https://www.myagedcare.gov.au
Podcasts for Clients


Thank you

MS Connect
1800 042 138
msconnect@ms.org.au

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