



Multiple Sclerosis Society

# Answering your questions about Multiple Sclerosis (MS)?

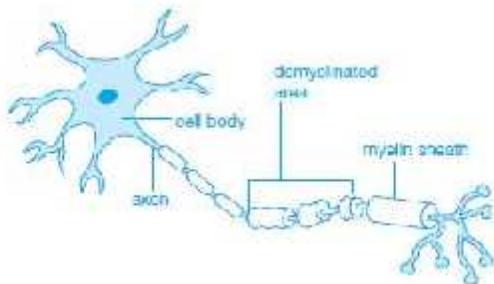
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## What is Multiple Sclerosis?

Nerve cells (neurons) contain nerve fibres (axons), which are surrounded by a protective sheath of fatty protein called myelin. This protects the nerves in the same way that insulating material protects an electric wire. In MS, damage or scarring occurs to the myelin sheath. This damage (called demyelination) disrupts the way in which messages, or nerve impulses, are carried to and from the brain and so can interfere with a range of the body's functions.

A nerve cell or neuron

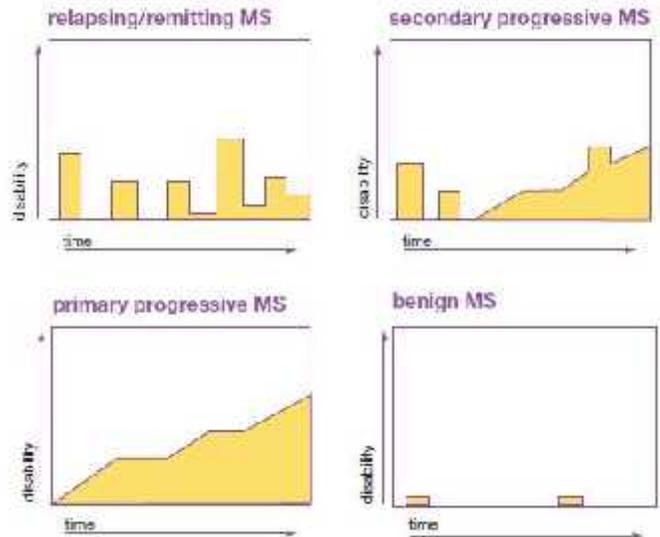


## Are there different types of MS?

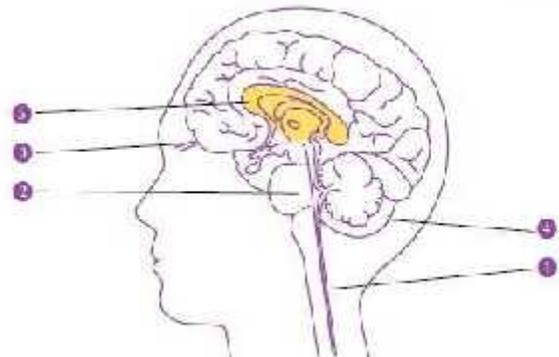
Yes, four types:

- **Relapsing remitting** – The majority of people are diagnosed with this form. They have times when symptoms get worse (relapses) followed by times when symptoms improve or go away (remission). These ups and downs are very unpredictable and can make life a bit of a roller coaster.
- **Secondary Progressive** – Many people who are diagnosed with relapsing remitting MS find that, over time, the frequency of relapses decreases but disability gradually increases.
- **Primary Progressive** – About 10% of people with MS are diagnosed with a form in which disability increases from the outset.
- **Benign MS** – About 15% of people with MS have a few, relatively mild attacks with long symptom-free periods in between.

## How do the different types of MS progress?



## If there are different sites of nerve damage what symptoms do they cause?



Site of Damage	Symptom
1 Spinal cord	Spasticity Bladder problems Bowel problems Weakness
2 Brainstem	Double vision and nystagmus
3 Optic nerve	Optic neuritis
4 Cerebellum	Balance and dizziness Tremor
5 Areas involved with thought and emotion	Cognition Depression
Symptoms not associated with a single area	Fatigue Speech and swallowing Pain

## Key facts about MS

- MS is a disease affecting the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord)
- An estimated 2,500,000 in world have MS.
- More than 100,000 people in the UK have MS
- 2,500 people in the UK are diagnosed with MS each year.
- Everyone's MS is different
- MS is not a fatal condition
- More women than men are diagnosed with MS
- It is not inherited but family members do have a slightly higher risk of developing MS

## MS Awareness Ribbons



MS Awareness ribbons

as it is:

MS Awareness Week 30th  
April - 6th May

15p/ribbon + p and p payment by PayPal or postal order

I can be contacted on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/MSawarenessribbons>

or on my web site <http://msawareness1.webs.com>

Order now to avoid disappointment

Use for fundraising as well as awareness

## Why Mum started making MS Awareness Ribbons

When I was first diagnosed in 1992 I knew nothing about Multiple Sclerosis except that it was incurable. I was not told at the time by the consultant which type of MS I had but I think that was because of the look of shock on the face of both my husband and myself. I never thought when I was having the tests that things could not be put right. I very much took good health for granted. The charities do a good job of informing people of the drugs and treatments that are available but when it comes to awareness week they obviously concentrate on raising funds for themselves otherwise they would not be able to exist. I would hope that one day the orange MS awareness ribbon will be as well known as the red for AIDS, or the pink for breast cancer.

## Jackie Cook - My Mum's story - Primary Progressive MS

As MS is the immune system attacking it's self, the nerves are surrounded by what is called the myelin sheath, a bit like the insulation cover round an electrical wire, the immune system makes holes in this sheath and when it heals it leaves a scar, or lesion, which then presses on the nerve stopping the signals travelling along it correctly. This causes the muscles to be unable to work correctly, or lack of feeling or perhaps 'pins and needles' also muscle wasting.

One symptom that almost everyone gets whichever variety they have is fatigue in varying degrees, personally mine is extreme. I feel extreme fatigue doing very little, which is most frustrating, the mind wants to do it but the body will not co-operate. Another thing many experience is very cold hands and feet, I find wearing flight socks keep my feet warm.

Trying to fight the fatigue only makes things worse, I get overtired and whilst I go to sleep at bedtime I wake at 4 am or 5 am and cannot get back to sleep. I make time every afternoon to have a sleep; even then I often have another sleep after tea. When overtired just sitting in a chair I get extremely stiff and then find it difficult to move, the danger then is of falling as once on the floor I cannot get up again, even with my husbands help we struggle! Even when I sleep 7, 8 or even 9 hours I never wake feeling rested. My hips and back can be painful when getting into the standing position, particularly in a morning by bedtime I am considerably better in fact can do it quite easily and pain free. I developed an under active Thyroid not long after being diagnosed with MS, unfortunately I was unable to tolerate the normal starting dose of Thyroxin as it made my muscle spasms worse, it has taken many years to achieve the correct dose with no side effects. More recently I developed vitamin B12 deficiency, but now have that under control.

Physiotherapy often helps, unfortunately I had mine at the local general hospital not somewhere specialising in neurology and as I knew nothing about MS I did not realize what type of physiotherapy would be best for me. It tended to be concentrated on keeping me walking which only increased the muscle spasms in my legs, in the end I had to stop going. I would have done better doing core strengthening type exercise as that made it easier to sit up for longer without feeling so tired.

I very rarely go downstairs as I need to rest in bed so much, I have an electric wheelchair upstairs and can still move about sufficiently to get into the wheelchair and use the bathroom for myself. I use the laptop in bed; have a television in my bedroom along with a printer and all the bits and pieces for making the cards shown on the hobbies and interests page of the website.

The next thing I should say is that when someone is diagnosed with MS it affects the whole family, not just the person with MS. I cannot do all the household things, which makes things difficult, everything falls to my husband to do.....shopping, cooking, cleaning, ironing, washing up even down to making me a cup of tea! It is easy to see why so many couples in this situation split up.

It is 20 years this August 2012 that I was diagnosed, for 15 of those I have been housebound. I had a small number of friends when diagnosed and over the years they drift away, one used to visit regularly but as her children have grown up that has gradually stopped. One reason I like the internet, at least I do not feel so isolated. It has made me mentally stronger; I also appreciate the world around me more, like watching the birds in the garden although I always used to put food out for them.

Our daughter was 15 when I was diagnosed; she left school at 16 to do a secretarial course at a college of Further Education. As her career progressed she took qualifications at evening classes which entitled her to a Graduation, I was unable to attend or take part in any celebrations.

We have missed out on being able to do the simple 'mother and daughter' things, when she started buying her house it was my husband that helped her decorate it. In fact I have never seen it but have had to accept just seeing photographs.

Later as she changed jobs she did a Master's Degree again part time whilst working and again I was unable to be part of it.

Her friends helped her celebrate because I was unable to, although my husband attended we could not do it as a family, which was very disappointing for both myself and her.

For more details please see....[www.msawareness1.webs.com](http://www.msawareness1.webs.com)