



## Managing Multiple Sclerosis

Managing multiple sclerosis (MS) is an ongoing process. Medication can reduce MS relapses and improve your quality of life. Rehabilitation can also help you improve and maintain function. To successfully manage MS, you need to take your medication even when you feel normal. If you experience side effects, it's important to talk to your healthcare provider about them before it becomes a serious problem. Amber Pharmacy is here to help you manage all aspects of your condition, including side effects.

MS can lead to a number of symptoms. These symptoms can vary from person to person and change over time. There are a variety of medications available to treat MS and some of its symptoms. Talk to your doctor about which medications are right for you. Following are some symptoms and common medication side effects you may experience with MS. However, your symptoms and side effects may vary from this list.



### Increased Risk of Infection

Your MS medication may make you more at risk for infections. It's important you take steps to protect your immune system. If you think you have an infection, tell your healthcare provider right away. Symptoms of infection include but aren't limited to:

- Fever
  - Chills or sweats
  - Sore throat
  - Shortness of breath
  - Stuffy nose
  - Redness, soreness or swelling in any area
  - Upset stomach
  - New onset of pain
  - Sores that don't heal
- 
- ▶ Use hand sanitizer and be sure to also wash your hands often with warm water and soap.
  - ▶ Avoid people who are sick.
  - ▶ Wash foods thoroughly before eating.
  - ▶ If you inject your medication, make sure the site is properly cleaned.

## Depression and Anxiety

Depression may be a side effect of your MS medication. It can also occur as a symptom when dealing with a long-term condition like MS. People with anxiety often have depression and can feel irritable, restless and angry. Additional symptoms of depression include:

- Tiredness
- Trouble thinking
- Not wanting to eat/eating too much
- Feeling sad
- Feeling indifferent
- Feeling withdrawn or lonely

It's important to tell your doctor if you're feeling depressed or anxious. Caring for your mental health is important to your overall health and well-being.

- ▶ Talk with other people who have MS by joining a support group.
- ▶ Stay active and avoid being alone.
- ▶ Get at least eight hours of sleep each night.
- ▶ Include exercise in your daily routine.
- ▶ Practice meditation each day and focus on a calm state of mind.
- ▶ Keep a journal of how you feel each day.
- ▶ Talk with your healthcare provider about your feelings to see if talking to a professional or additional medication may help you.

## Avoid the Heat

Many people with MS feel worse when the weather is hot or humid. Activities like tanning, getting overheated from exercise or taking very hot showers can have the same effect. Even though heat does not cause more disease activity, it can make you feel worse.

- ▶ Stay inside if the weather is hot.
- ▶ Use cooling products like vests, neck wraps and bandanas during exercise or outdoor activities.
- ▶ Wear loose clothing.
- ▶ Drink something cold.
- ▶ Put an ice pack on the back of your neck or forehead.
- ▶ Dress in layers so you can cool off if needed.

## Quit Smoking

Smoking may worsen the side effects of your medication. It can also hasten the progression of MS. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for information on the best ways to quit smoking. He or she may have you try nicotine gum or patches, or medication. Amber Specialty Pharmacy also has educational resources that can help you quit smoking.



## Flu-like Symptoms

---

You may experience flu-like symptoms, depending on your medication. This includes fever, chills, headaches and muscle pain. Usually, these side effects occur shortly after taking your medication and can last for a few days. Talk with your healthcare provider about different medications that may be helpful in relieving some of these side effects.

- ▶ Drink plenty of water.
- ▶ If your medication is injected, let it warm it to room temperature before administering.
- ▶ Take your medication before bed to sleep through the discomfort.
- ▶ Eat a healthy diet.
- ▶ Get enough rest and take time to relax.
- ▶ Limit caffeine.
- ▶ Keep blankets or clothes nearby in case you get chills.

## Rash

---

Some MS medications can cause a rash or itchy skin. To prevent rashes from becoming infected, do not scratch your skin. Tell your healthcare provider if you notice any skin changes.

- ▶ Drink plenty of water.
- ▶ Apply unscented moisturizer immediately after a shower or bath.
- ▶ Avoid showers or baths that are too hot.
- ▶ Take an oatmeal bath (add one cup of oatmeal to bath).
- ▶ Apply cold packs wrapped in a towel to itchy areas.
- ▶ Wear loose fitting clothes.
- ▶ Protect your skin from the sun with clothing or sun block.

## Headache

---

Some MS medications may cause headaches.

- ▶ Take your medication at bedtime to sleep through the discomfort.
- ▶ Ask your healthcare provider if you are able to take pain relievers and which ones are best for you.
- ▶ Drink plenty of water.
- ▶ Avoid caffeine.

### *Headache Continued...*

- ▶ If you get a headache, keep the lights dim and avoid loud noises and strong smells. Rest and try to relax until the headache goes away.
- ▶ Seek medical attention if these tips don't relieve your headache or if the headache is severe

## Nausea

---

It's possible that your MS medication will make you feel nauseous. Nausea is often described as feeling sick to the stomach and can range from mild discomfort to the urge to vomit. Nausea or vomiting can also lead to dehydration, so it's important to drink enough water. If your nausea continues, you should work with your doctor to find out what is making you nauseous and take steps to control it.

- ▶ Drink and eat slowly.
- ▶ Try eating smaller meals more often.
- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids.
- ▶ Drink peppermint, chamomile or ginger tea.
- ▶ Eat foods at room temperature.
- ▶ Avoid foods or food odors that may make you nauseous.
- ▶ Avoid greasy, fried or spicy foods.
- ▶ Try to get plenty of rest.
- ▶ Add a slice of lemon, lime, orange, mint or cucumber to your water for flavor.

## Diarrhea

---

Some people experience diarrhea as a side effect of their medication. Diarrhea is frequent, loose or watery bowel movements and ranges from mild to severe. Diarrhea many times a day can make you weak and dehydrated. Don't be embarrassed to share concerns with your healthcare provider. Let them know if you have had diarrhea for over 24 hours.

- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids without caffeine (water, sports drinks, etc.).
  - ▶ Eat small meals of soft, bland, low fiber foods - bananas, white bread, rice, applesauce, noodles or chicken.
  - ▶ Avoid spicy or fatty foods.
  - ▶ Avoid dairy or high sugar foods.
  - ▶ Avoid high fiber foods - beans, whole grain breads and cereals, nuts, raw vegetables or fruits.
-



## Trouble Thinking

---

Many people with MS have problems thinking. This can include memory loss, trouble focusing, a hard time planning and trouble with word recall. It's important to discuss these symptoms with your healthcare provider who may advise rehabilitation.

- ▶ If you are learning something new, give yourself extra time.
- ▶ Plan your most difficult tasks at the time you feel best during the day.
- ▶ If your thinking feels foggy, take a break from what you are doing and try again later.
- ▶ Put important objects, like your wallet or car keys, in the same spot each day.
- ▶ If you can't find the right word to say, try to shift your attention to something else. The word will come back to you later.
- ▶ Make sure you're getting enough sleep.
- ▶ Activities like puzzles, reading and conversation can help your mind stay sharp.
- ▶ Share with others how you feel. Joining an MS support group and learning how others manage cognitive issues can help you learn.
- ▶ Ask your healthcare provider if a referral for cognitive rehabilitation would help you.

## Pain Management

---

People with MS may experience all types of pain. It can be acute or chronic and can feel like burning, aching, pins and needles, sharp or dull. The pain can be anywhere on your body and can stay in one place or move. If you begin having pain, you should speak with your doctor to help diagnose the reason for the pain, and make a treatment plan.

If the pain is severe and traditional methods aren't helping, talk to your healthcare provider to see what types of medications may help you manage your pain.

- ▶ When you begin feeling pain, let your healthcare provider know right away.
  - ▶ Take a warm bubble bath or try getting a massage.
  - ▶ Keep a pain diary where you can write down how your pain feels each day, then share it with your healthcare provider.
  - ▶ Visiting a chiropractor can help with pain if it's okay with your healthcare provider.
  - ▶ Try yoga, Tai Chi, swimming or water aerobics.
-

# FAQs

---

## ***What is multiple sclerosis (MS)?***

MS is a lifelong disease that causes the body's immune system to attack the central nervous system, which is made up of the brain and spinal cord. Normally, the immune system checks the body for things that can make you ill, like bacteria and unhealthy cells.

When someone has MS, the body believes the nerve tissue is bad when it's healthy. This results in destruction of myelin, the protective covering over the nerves. When myelin is damaged, the brain has trouble sending messages to the rest of the body. When the myelin is under attack, it is known as a flare. If a flare is not stopped, permanent damage can occur. After the flare has stopped, sometimes patients will return to their previous function, other times, the symptoms will remain.

## ***What causes MS?***

The cause of MS is unknown but scientists believe it's caused by a few different things. MS can be caused by certain cells in the immune system. Your environment may play a part in your chances of having MS. For example, studies show that smoking and low Vitamin D levels increase the risk of having MS. Having a close relative with MS, like a parent or sibling, or having a certain ethnic background may increase your risk of having the disease.

MS affects more than 2.3 million people in the world. Even though people of all ages can have MS, most people are between the ages of 20 and 50 when they are diagnosed with MS. Women are also more likely than men to have MS.

## ***What are the symptoms of MS?***

Since MS damages the central nervous system, almost anything can be affected. Each MS patient is unique and will have their own set of symptoms in varying degrees of severity, but common symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Trouble with vision
- Change in sensation
- Trouble with movement

These symptoms may vary widely with each patient.

Sometimes these symptoms can disappear (especially if the patient is on treatment) or they may persist if significant damage has occurred. MS is a chronic progressive disease. It can be managed but there is no cure for MS.

## ***What kind of treatments are available?***

After being diagnosed with MS, it's important to be proactive about your health. Medication may help reduce the number of MS relapses, slow the progression of the disease, and improve the symptoms caused by MS. There are several medications that treat MS. Talk to your healthcare provider about which medication is best for you. To feel your best, it's important you continue taking your medication, even when you feel normal.

Rehabilitation may also help you manage the symptoms of MS. By working with a rehabilitation specialist, you can learn how to manage your symptoms both at home and at work. Rehabilitation may also help with speech problems and memory issues.

Alternative medicine, like taking supplements or practicing meditation may also help manage MS symptoms. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider before taking any supplements to make sure they do not cause problems with your medication.

## ***How do I manage side effects?***

Medication can affect each patient differently. Amber Specialty Pharmacy works with patients to help manage any side effects that occur. It's important to discuss any side effects that you experience with your pharmacist or doctor early.

.....

**Amber Specialty Pharmacy works  
with patients to help manage any  
side effects that may occur.**

.....



## Amber Specialty Pharmacy is here to help.

We offer guidance and support through our dedicated team of healthcare experts. From the beginning, we help you with the enrollment process and review your insurance coverage. We explore financial assistance opportunities to help you lower your medication costs whenever possible. Our pharmacists review your prescriptions with you - including how to take your medication and manage any side effects. Pharmacists are available 24/7 to assist you when you have questions. Our Registered Nurse and Registered Dietitian offer personalized consultations to assist you with any medically-based questions and nutritional care. We stay in touch with you regularly to remind you when it is time to refill your prescriptions. We are always here to help.

This information is intended for educational purposes only. The material is not a substitute for professional help or medical diagnosis. It is important that you consult a medical professional if this information leads you to believe there is a concern for you or your patient(s). The diagnosis and treatment of all physical and/or psychological disorders requires a trained professional.