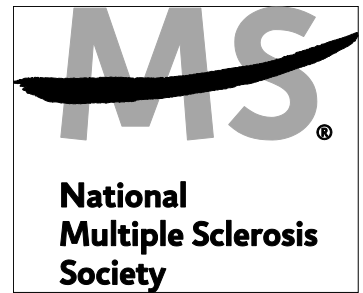


## What is Multiple Sclerosis?



### 1. What is multiple sclerosis?

- MS is a disease of the *central nervous system*.
- The body's immune system begins to attack its own cells. It destroys the myelin sheath that protects the nerves in the brain and central nervous system.
- When the sheath is damaged, it interferes with the brain's ability to send and receive messages.
- It's chronic, unpredictable and often disabling. The damage is irreparable.

Multiple – More than 1 area of the brain and/or spinal cord is affected.

Sclerosis – MS causes the brain and nerve tissue to become scarred (sclerosed).

### 2. Who gets MS?

- Twice as many women as men have MS.
- Most symptoms occur between age 20 and 50 years of age.
- It's more common among Caucasians, especially those of northern European ancestry, but people of African, Asian, and Hispanic backgrounds are not immune.

### 3. How many people have MS?

- The Inland Northwest area has one of the *highest rates* of MS in the United States and in the world, with a ratio of 225 cases per 100,000 people with over 2,500 people diagnosed with MS.
- Nationwide, approximately 400,000 Americans have MS, and every week about 200 people are diagnosed.

### 4. Is MS fatal, curable, contagious, or genetic? **NO!!**

- Most people will live a near normal life expectancy.
- MS is treatable but not curable.
- No one can "catch" MS.
- Research does not suggest a genetic trait to the disease; however, ancestry does play a role.

### 5. What are the symptoms of MS?

Symptoms of MS are unpredictable; very from person to person, and from time to time in the same person. Symptoms may include: muscle stiffness or spasms, vision difficulties, weakness or unusual tiredness, numbness or tingling, dragging of feet, staggering, loss of balance, trembling or twitching, poor coordination, loss of bladder or bowel control, memory problems, trouble with speech, and partial or complete paralysis of any body part.

6. **What treatments are available for people with MS?** *Although there is no cure for MS, there are ways to assist people to remain independent, comfortable and productive.*

- *Medication:* The National Multiple Sclerosis Society recommends early and ongoing treatment with an FDA-approved therapy. Learn about your options by talking to your health care professional.
- *Good Health Habits:* Regular exercise, nutritious diet, adequate sleep and rest can all help someone with MS feel better. Because this disease affects the immune system, it is important to get medical attention for infections immediately.
- *Physical-Occupational-Speech Therapy:* Therapeutic treatments can help people regain some muscle control after acute attacks, teach people how to conserve energy and prioritize daily tasks. Equipment for work and home can improve safety and comfort.
- *Counseling:* Individual and group counseling can help people with MS and their families deal with depression, anxiety and limitation caused by MS.

7. **Where the money goes...**

- As efficient, effective stewards of our donors' contributions, we make sure that more than 79 cents out of every dollar goes directly to improve the lives of people living with MS and their families through programs, services and by funding MS research. The remaining 18 cents of every dollar is wisely invested to strengthen our capacity to better serve people with MS through efficient administration and fundraising. In addition, 3% annually is placed in reserves to provide for future unanticipated needs. Below is a list of just a few of the services our donors' support enables:
- **To provide direct support and financial assistance.** Just as MS affects each person uniquely, we respond to individual needs. From the young adult newly diagnosed, to the man or woman who has lived with the disease for decades, to the family member caring for a loved one, we are a one-stop source of support, service and advice.
- **To champion families affected by MS** by coordinating family and social programs, a college scholarship program for kids with MS or kids who have parents living with MS, and other family support programs.
- **To support research and training projects.** The National MS Society is the largest private funder of MS research in the world. We are a driving force of MS research and treatment to stop disease progression, restore function, and end MS forever.

The Inland Northwest Chapter serves ten counties in northern Idaho and fifteen counties in eastern Washington.