

# CHOCICEFS

## SYMPTOMS

**(Some are common to most people, some are relatively rare)**

MSRC believes that based on experience, people cope best when they look at what is happening, rather than what might be. MS can cause a long list of symptoms; this list is not exhaustive and it is extremely unlikely that any one person would experience all or even most of these symptoms. Most will only experience a small number of these. The combination, severity and frequency will be different for everyone.

Symptoms can come and go; some are much more responsive to treatment whereas others are more difficult to manage.

Outside influences can exacerbate symptoms. For example, hot weather can make fatigue worsen. Infections can cause all sorts of other complications, however once the infection is treated the symptoms should subside.

New symptoms may not always be down to your MS. It is important to remember that not every ache and pain is connected and if a new symptom persists and becomes an ongoing problem, you should seek medical advice.

Below are some of the more common symptoms experienced, with a brief explanation. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms and they are causing you problems, it is advisable to contact your GP or MS Nurse or ask to be referred to the appropriate specialist. Most symptoms can be treated; you do not have to just 'put up' with them!

### **Muscle and Motor Disturbances**

This can be the loss of control of one or more limbs. For example, *Myoclonus* (sudden and uncontrollable shock-like movements or "jerks" of a muscle or a group of muscles), *swallowing difficulties*, *tremor* and the inability to perform fine movements – e.g. doing up buttons, tying shoe laces etc. Legs or arms may suddenly go into spasm which is often painful. Walking may become difficult.

### **Loss of Co-ordination**

This can include dizziness and vertigo, ataxia, staggering, clumsiness (spilling and dropping things).

### **Fatigue**

Extreme tiredness, otherwise known as fatigue, is a common symptom of MS. This is an invisible symptom that is not obvious to other people and can be quite difficult to cope with and manage. There are a number of ways in which people learn to live with their fatigue and drug treatments are also available. (See our leaflet on Fatigue for more information).



## **Visual disturbances**

The most common symptom that can affect your vision is Optic Neuritis – inflammation of the optic nerve, which is also one of the more common first symptoms that can lead to a diagnosis. Other problems can include things like double vision, temporary loss of vision, nystagmus (rhythmical oscillations of the eye ball), and pain. Steroids are often given to help treat some of these symptoms. (See our leaflet on Visual Disturbances for more information).

## **Sensory**

The impairment of sensory perception includes the loss of feeling in limbs and other areas; tingling, varying degrees of pain, including Neuropathic Pain.

## **Bladder and Bowel problems**

Bladder problems include the need to empty the bladder more frequently and more urgently than perhaps is normal. Constipation is the most common bowel problem. A referral to a Continence Advisor will help to find ways in which to deal with problems in all these areas. (See our leaflet on Bladders & Bowels for more information).

## **Pain**

One of the lesser known symptoms of MS. This at long last, is being acknowledged and treated. There are two main types of pain that can occur – Neuropathic and Musculoskeletal. Once the cause is identified the pain can be treated accordingly with either drugs or by seeing someone like a Physiotherapist or a Pain Clinic. (See our leaflet on Pain for more information).

Symptoms can become more pronounced when MS is active and may lessen or disappear again when the MS is quiet. In some people, symptoms fluctuate when the person is tired, upset or anxious.

If you are experiencing some of these symptoms, or others that may not be mentioned please contact MSRC for more information, advice and support.