

# MANAGING MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

This guide provides information that will help patients work with their healthcare teams to manage the symptoms of living with MS



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*A Guide for  
Patients*

# Managing Multiple Sclerosis: A Guide for Patients

This guide provides information on nutrition and exercise, dietary supplements and non-pharmaceutical options to help you work with your health care providers to manage the disease of MS.

Using a journal to keep track of your symptoms and activity levels between visits to your MS health care professionals, and keeping a close record of your medications and the way they make you feel, provides detail about your health and lifestyle that is important to your healthcare team.

## Tracking your symptoms:

A basic symptom tracker is provided in this toolkit. Various symptom trackers are available in downloadable format or for use on a digital platform like a smart-phone or other web-based device. You can access and review different resources through browser searches or, for your convenience, by following these links to some examples:

[atpointofcare symptom tracker](#)

[msatrium symptom tracker](#)

[ms symptoms diary](#)

MSAA Multiple Sclerosis Self-Care Manager for [Android](#) or [iPhone](#)

Symptoms	Start Date	Severity					Describe impact on daily life
		Mild				Severe	
Fatigue		1	2	3	4	5	
Depression		1	2	3	4	5	
Muscle spasm/weakness		1	2	3	4	5	
Pain		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	
		1	2	3	4	5	

Other common symptoms of MS include:

- Difficulty with swallowing
- Dizziness
- Vision problems
- Difficulty speaking
- Sexual problems
- Problems with mobility
- Change in mood
- Problems with memory
- Problems with balance
- Concentration problems
- Bowel or bladder problems
- Problems with coordination

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity	Duration	Effort		Describe activity and physical tolerance for it
		L	H	
Weight-bearing		1	2 3	
Cardio		1	2 3	
Strength-building		1	2 3	
Flexibility		1	2 3	
Balance		1	2 3	
		1	2 3	

Moderate exercise can stimulate your energy levels, helping to reduce the feeling of fatigue. Exercise helps to regulate many bodily functions and has been shown to elevate moods, minimizing the impact of depression.

Medication	Dose	List any side effects or intolerances

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Summary of complementary and alternative medicine (caM) – Vitamins, Minerals and Herbs

Supplement/ RDA	Role in body	Sources	Potential MS-specific relevancy
<b>VITAMINS</b>			
<b>Vitamin D</b> (Vitamin D3 at 600-800 iU, women and men)	Hormone, chemical messenger	Sunlight; fish and fortified dairy products and breakfast cereals	Protection from/reduction in risk of developing MS; helps maintain bone density  Low Vitamin D levels have been associated with increased attacks, relapses, exacerbations and increased levels of disability
<b>Vitamin A</b> (Women: 2300 iU; Men: 3000 iU)	Necessary for vision; promotes normal cell growth and differentiation	Liver, eggs, cod liver oil	No definitive conclusions as to benefit or risk for people living with MS
<b>Vitamin C</b> (Women: 75 mg; Men: 90 mg.)	Builds and maintains body tissues	Citrus fruits and tomatoes	<i>Possible</i> reduced risk of urinary tract infections
<b>Vitamin E</b> (22 iU, women and men)	Prevents oxidative damage to cell membranes or linings	Vegetable oils, fruits, vegetables, nuts, meat	MS patients who increase intake of Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids (PuFAs) need to increase intake of Vitamin E accordingly.
<b>Vitamin B6</b> (1.3 mg ages 19-50)	Necessary for amino acid conversions.	Fish (especially salmon and tuna), pork, chicken, beans, bananas and many vegetables	May help increase energy level of patients Symptoms associated with Vitamin B6 <i>overdose</i> may mimic MS symptoms.
<b>Vitamin B12</b> (2.4 mcg, women and men)	Required for production of red blood cells and proper function of nervous system	Eggs, meat, poultry, shellfish, dairy products	Symptoms associated with Vitamin B12 <i>deficiencies</i> may mimic MS symptoms

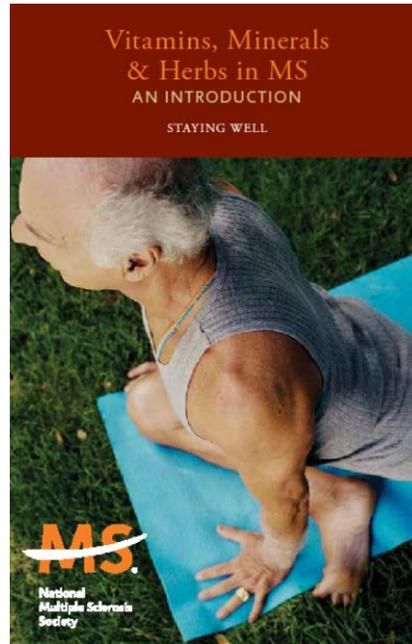
Supplement/ RDA	Role in body	Sources	Potential MS-specific relevancy
<b>MINERALS</b>			
<b>Selenium</b> (55 mcg after age 14)	Antioxidant	Seafood, legumes, whole grains, low-fat meats, dairy products	<i>Possibly</i> increases the immune response, which may not be desirable for people with MS
<b>Calcium</b> (1000-1200 mg)	Formation of teeth and bone; regulation of many body processes	Dairy products, eggs, green leafy vegetables	Decreases risk factor for thinning of bones or developing osteoporosis
<b>Zinc</b> (Women: 8 mg; Men: 11 mg)			High-dose supplementation can cause a copper deficiency that can lead to copper-deficiency myelopathy, a condition that causes neurological symptoms that may mimic MS symptoms
<b>HERBS</b>			
<b>Ginkgo Biloba</b>	Antioxidant		May improve cognitive ability, memory, concentration, fatigue; inhibits platelet activating factor (paF), which can cause a decrease in the activity of certain immune cells
<b>Echinacea</b> ( <i>Echinacea purpurea</i> )	Decreases duration of common cold symptoms		May stimulate the immune system, a theoretical risk to people with MS
<b>St. John's Wort</b>	Antidepressant		May pose risk of interaction with some commonly used MS medications
<b>Valerian</b>	Sleep aid		No definitive conclusions as to benefit or risk for people living with MS
<b>Asian Ginseng</b>	Enhances physical performance, resistance to stress and aging		No definitive conclusions as to benefit or risk for people living with MS
<b>Cranberry</b>	Used to prevent or treat urinary tract infections		People living with MS should never self-treat a UTI only with cranberry juice because of the serious consequences of UTIs for MS patients
<b>Oral Cannabis Extract (OCE) and Synthetic Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)</b>	Used to reduce patient-reported symptoms of spasticity and pain		Probably ineffective for improving objective measures of spasticity or improvements in tremor Note: Oromucosal Cannabinoid Spray is sometimes used to improve urinary incontinence but has not been proven for significant benefit

## Summary of complementary and alternative medicine (caM) – Diet and Exercise

MS-relevant Symptom	Potential contributors/indicators	Diet and exercise strategies
<b>Fatigue</b> (Neuromuscular, depression-related, MS lassitude)	Decreased appetite and activity, loss of interest in food preparation, poor eating habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate exercise can stimulate energy, reduce fatigue</li> <li>• Make every meal count nutritionally</li> <li>• Keep meals quick and easy</li> <li>• Follow a menu plan</li> <li>• Stock up on healthy, basic staples</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional changes</b> (Mood swings, depression)	Decreased appetite and activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate exercise can stimulate mood, decrease depression</li> <li>• Tune into how mood affects food choices</li> <li>• Eat meals with other people to help stay connected</li> </ul>
<b>Mobility issues</b> (Weight management)	Being overweight or underweight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise can help manage weight and maximize range of motion and flexibility</li> <li>• Balance food intake and activity level</li> <li>• Eliminate foods with low nutritional value</li> <li>• Control portions</li> <li>• Consume “light” versions of foods when possible</li> </ul>
<b>Bone Health</b>	Lack of adequate physical activity sedentary lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise helps protect weight-bearing bone mass</li> <li>• Eat a calcium-rich diet: fish, low-fat or nonfat dairy, low-oxate dark green veggies, calcium-fortified prepared foods</li> <li>• Use calcium supplements: Calcium Carbonate offers best value but must be taken with food; Calcium Citrate absorbs more easily and can be taken on empty stomach</li> <li>• Get enough Vitamin D, which helps with the absorption of calcium</li> </ul>
<b>Bladder concerns</b>	Frequency, urgency, self-imposed fluid restrictions for “managing” bladder problems, concentrated urine and associated irritation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take daily oral medications with a full glass of water</li> <li>• Build in water breaks throughout the day</li> <li>• Eat foods with a high water content (lettuce, squash, watermelon, tomatoes, broccoli, strawberries, etc.)</li> <li>• Limit fluids containing caffeine, aspartame, alcohol</li> <li>• Include cranberry juice or tablets in daily intake</li> </ul>
<b>Constipation</b>	Bowel incontinence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise helps maintain regular bowel and bladder function</li> <li>• Consume 25-30 grams of fiber daily through cereal grains, nuts, seeds, vegetables, fruits</li> <li>• Consider fiber supplement if adequate intake is not achieved through diet</li> </ul>

## Resources

The images below illustrate some of the additional resources available through the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.



The National Multiple Sclerosis Society: <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/> or 1-800-344-4867: