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### Multiple Sclerosis

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# MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

By Terryn Dyche and Rachel Wainwright

## What Caused This?

Unfortunately, we do not know the cause. Genetics, viruses, and environmental factors including Vitamin D levels can play a role. For most, Multiple Sclerosis will be experienced for the duration of a person's life, however the severity of symptoms can be controlled with medications and therapy. (Files et al., 2015; Forwell et al., 2018).

## Symptoms to Expect?

- Pain
- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Tremors
- Cognitive issues
- Bladder dysfunction
- Abnormal muscle tightening
- Heat sensitivity

Other possible symptoms:

- Urinary tract infection
- Depression

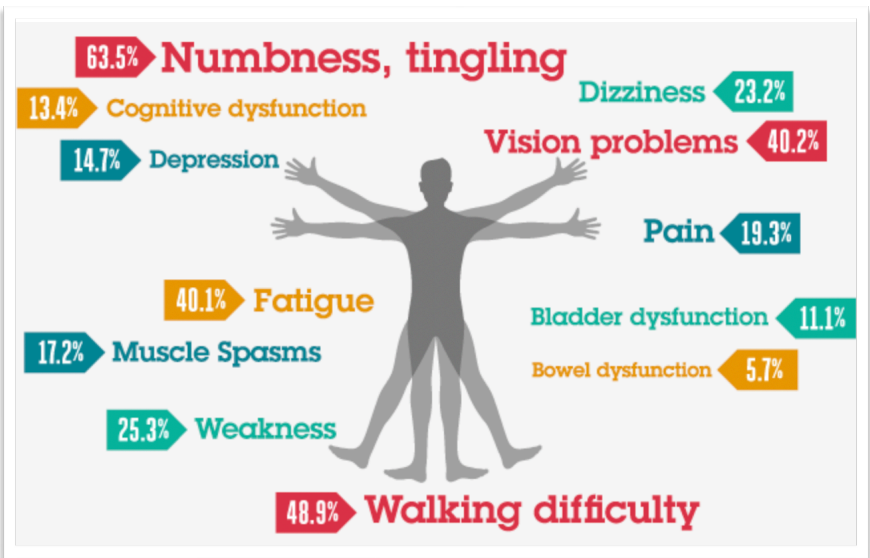
(Forwell et al., 2018)

## What is Multiple Sclerosis?

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is the body's immune system attacking the protective covering of the nerves in the brain and spinal cord. "Multiple" refers to the spreading across both the location and time of the attacks, and "sclerosis" refers to the scars (damage) left by the body after the attacks. The signals coming from the brain are slowed or completely interrupted, impacting various parts of the body. There are 4 different types of MS. Symptoms of each type depend on frequency of attacks and how quickly it progresses. It is hard to predict one's journey with MS, but it has been shown to decrease life expectancy by 7-14 years. (Files et al., 2015; Forwell et al., 2018).

## Who Else Has This?

Across 75 countries it is reported that 2.1 out of 100,000 people are diagnosed with MS per year (Walton et al., 2020). About 350,000 individuals are living with MS in the US (Files et al., 2015).



(Elite Physical Therapy, 2022)



(Able Motion, LLC., 2022)

## What Can Occupational Therapy Do To Help?

Occupational Therapy (OT) can play a key role in helping improve the quality of life for a person diagnosed with MS based on their symptoms, such as fatigue and pain. This can be done through assessments based on areas affected by the disease, then collaborating with the patient to create strategies to regain as much functional independence as possible.

### OT Assessments

#### The Modified Fatigue Impact Scale (MFIS)

- Measures physical, mental, and emotional fatigue in your life. (Meca-Lallana et al., 2019)

#### Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS)

- How this life-changing diagnosis effects mental wellbeing. (Kiropoulos et al., 2021)

### Interventions

- Assistive technology for foot drop. Left Foot Pedal allows those who suffer a right foot drop to still be independent with driving. (See image upper left corner)
- A fatigue management plan can help organize tasks in a more energy efficient way. A great tool to measure expelled energy includes the concept of “The Spoon Theory” by Christine Miserando.
- Cooling vest have been shown to help MS patients with the ability to participate in activities longer and more effectively (Kaltsatou & Flourish, 2019).
- Mindfulness techniques can play a huge impact in a person’s over all well-being (Carletto et al., 2020).

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