

Talking to Your Doctor about Multiple Sclerosis

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You have a unique medical history. Therefore, it is essential to talk with your doctor about your personal risk factors and/or experience with multiple sclerosis. By talking openly and regularly with your doctor, you can take an active role in your care.

General Tips for Gathering Information

Here are some tips that will make it easier for you to talk to your doctor:

- Bring someone else with you. It helps to have another person hear what is said and think of questions to ask.
- Write out your questions ahead of time, so you don't forget them.
- Write down the answers you get, and make sure you understand what you are hearing. Ask for clarification, if necessary.
- Don't be afraid to ask your questions or ask where you can find more information about what you are discussing. You have a right to know.

Specific Questions to Ask Your Doctor

About Multiple Sclerosis

- What type of MS do I have?
- How quickly is it likely to become worse?
- What can I expect in regards to flare-ups?
- How can I plan my life when I never know when I will have a flare-up?

About Your Risk of Developing Multiple Sclerosis

- Based on my medical history, lifestyle, and family background, am I at risk for MS? Are other family members at risk?

About Treatment Options

- How do I best treat MS?
- What are the risks and benefits associated with each treatment option?
- What other options are there?
- What medications are available to help me?
- What are the benefits/side effects of these medications?
- Will these medications interact with other medications, over-the-counter products, or dietary or herbal supplements I am already taking for other conditions?
- How long will I have to take these medications?
- What are the costs of these medications?
- What is the plan if the treatment does not succeed in controlling my symptoms?

About Lifestyle Changes

- What will I need to change in my daily routine?
- How long can I expect to continue working and caring for myself?
- Should I engage in exercise?
- What type of exercise is best?
- How much should I exercise?
- How do I get started with an exercise program?
- Are there dietary changes I should make? How do I go about it?
- Is there anything I can do to prevent a flare-up?

About Outlook

- What are my risks for developing complications of MS?
- Will I still be able to have children?
- Will I put my future children at risk for this disease?
- Will I have to put my MS medications “on hold” when pregnant or trying to conceive?
- Will I be able to live a normal life?
- What is the likelihood I will be totally disabled or need help with personal care?