



# Multiple Sclerosis Care Guide

Over 100,000 people in the UK have Multiple Sclerosis. Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a condition that affects the nerves in the brain and spinal cord.

The damage that is done to the nerves during MS is due to the immune system mistakenly attacking nerve coatings. This leads to symptoms such as weakness, fatigue, balance and coordination issues, numbness/tingling, pain, problems with vision and cognition.

Although MS is not fatal, it is an unpredictable, lifelong condition that affects a person in a number of ways both physically and emotionally. Further, it affects each person differently and the effects experienced may change over time.

## MS Symptoms

**Pain** – People with MS may experience facial pains that are triggered by anything from smiling to yawning, referred to as trigeminal neuralgia (TN). TN can lead to burning, itching, muscle cramping or aching sensations. Another type of pain unique to MS is dysesthesia, or the ‘MS hug’. This pain is focused on a person’s waist, legs, feet, or arms. Dysesthesia is either a tingling feeling or numbness.

Warm compresses may help reduce these pains as well as wrapping legs or arms in pressure stockings/ gloves. The pressure may help offset the feeling of pain to one of pressure.

**Mobility Issues** – Because MS affects the nerves in your brain and spinal cord, people with MS may find it difficult to move. To remain mobile and reduce your chances of falling, it is important to start a fitness routine to increase your strength. Exercise programs that focus on strengthening your core or improving balance and posture will help you increase strength in the most important muscles as well as your overall strength.



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## Supporting someone with MS

The unpredictable nature of MS naturally leads to people experiencing a range of emotions, from fear to anger. Communication is key to feeling supported, therefore try to engage in open dialogue to better deal with your emotions.

Family members/loved ones should try to be more understanding. When you understand MS and its symptoms, you can >plan ahead for social outings and carry necessary supplies with you. Maintain and foster a positive attitude to lighten the person's mood and keep them positive.

Be supportive by showing them that your relationship has not changed due to their diagnosis. Continue to invite them to social events and if their symptoms are flaring up, alter plans to better accommodate them. Ensure that they do not feel like a burden and that your relationship is not affected by this. It is unfair to expect someone with MS to be positive and optimistic at all times, so be sensitive to their mood swings and offer your help in any way possible.

Be helpful. Offer to help them with daily living activities or with real tasks they need to get done. In this way, your offer to help them will be more concrete and easier for them to accept.

## Financial Considerations

Developing MS can increase your personal expenses drastically. Foundations like the [MS Society](#) offer financial help and grants to people with MS in the UK to help with equipment, respite breaks and adaptations.



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