



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

Facts About MS

- More than 400,000 people in the United States have MS.
- An estimated 2,500,000 around the world have MS.
- In the UK, approx 70,000 people have the disease.
- Approx 50,000 people in Canada have Multiple Sclerosis.
- Scotland has the highest incidence of Multiple Sclerosis per head of population in the world.
- In Scotland, over 10,500 people have Multiple Sclerosis.
- About 45 percent of the people with MS are not severely affected by the disease.
- Diagnosis of MS is usually between 20 and 40 years of age.
- MS affects more women than men, with a ratio of 2:1.
- About 85 percent of those who are newly diagnosed have the relapsing-remitting form of MS.
- Without disease-modifying therapy, about 50 percent of those diagnosed with relapsing-remitting MS will become progressive at 10 years.
- Without disease-modifying therapy, about one-third of those diagnosed with relapsing-remitting MS will be using a wheelchair at 20 years.
- Average age of clinical onset is 30 – 33 years of age.
- The average age of diagnosis is 37 years of age.
- The average time between clinical onset of MS and diagnosis by physicians is 4 - 5 years.
- 10% of cases are diagnosed after the age of fifty.
- **In 1936, only 8% of patients were reported to survive beyond 20 years after onset of illness.**
- **In 1961, over 80% of Multiple Sclerosis patients were reported surviving to 20 years after onset of illness.**
- **2002 - A patient with Multiple Sclerosis can expect to live to average population life-expectancy minus seven years (mean life expectancy - 7 years) - Funding research and treatment has resulted in much progress to the quality and length of life for those with MS.**
- The course of the disease is unpredictable and no two people will experience the same set of symptoms.
- There are four types of MS: relapsing-remitting, secondary-progressive, primary progressive and progressive relapsing.
- Among young adults, MS is the most common disease of the central nervous system.
- Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms of MS.
- MS is not contagious.
- MS is a progressive disease for which there is not yet a cure.
- **Increased understanding of MS has led to the development of many new treatments that target both the disease process and its many symptoms.**
- In countries further from the equator, the incidence of MS increases.



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- Sclerosis is a Greek word meaning hardening of tissue or scars.
- MS is not inherited or genetically transmitted, although there does seem to be some genetic susceptibility to the disease.
- Although multiple sclerosis is considered an "adult disease" there are approximately 8,000-10,000 children who have MS, and another 10,000-15,000 who have experienced what may be symptoms of MS.
- \$2 million per person: the average lifetime cost of having MS.
- Every hour in the United States, another person is diagnosed with MS.
- First Diagnosed in 1849
- The earliest known description of a person with possible Multiple Sclerosis dates from 14th century Holland.
- Multiple Sclerosis is the most common progressive and disabling neurological condition in young adults.
- No virus has ever been isolated as the cause of Multiple Sclerosis.
- Multiple Sclerosis is five times more prevalent in temperate climates than in tropical climates.
- Multiple Sclerosis affects women much more frequently than men. Approx. 1.7 – 2:1 in the US and approx 3:2 in the UK.
- The ratio of white to non-white is approx 2:1.
- Gypsies and Inuit's do get Multiple Sclerosis although the incidence rate is much lower than other populations at approx 19 per 100,000.
- Native Indians of North and South America, the Japanese and other Asian peoples have a very low incidence rate of Multiple Sclerosis.
- In identical twins where one twin develops the disease, the likelihood of the second twin developing Multiple Sclerosis is approximately 30%.
- The incidence rate for non-identical twins, where one contracts Multiple Sclerosis, is approx 4%.
- The risk of contracting Multiple Sclerosis if a first-degree relative (father, mother, sibling) has the disease, is approx 1% - 3% overall.
- The risk of contracting Multiple Sclerosis if your father has the disease is approx 1 in 100.
- The risk of contracting Multiple Sclerosis if your mother has the disease is approx 1 in 50.
- The risk among the general population of contracting Multiple Sclerosis is approx 1 in 800.