Living independently with MS

Receiving a diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) can be very distressing for those affected and their families, but there are things you can do to maintain independence and carry on living as normal a life as possible.

Living with MS

Multiple Sclerosis (MS), affecting

2.3 MILLION

people globally, is a chronic disease of the

CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM

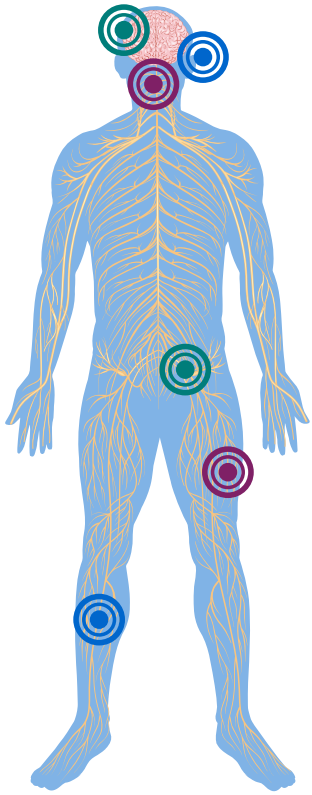
and the leading cause of non-traumatic disability among

YOUNG ADULTS

in many developed countries.[1]

Symptoms can include:

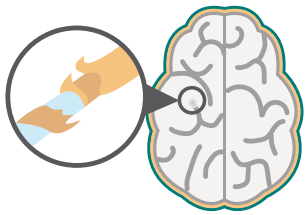
FATIGUE
DIFFICULTY WALKING
NUMBNESS OR TINGLING
WEAKNESS
VISION PROBLEMS
DIZZINESS & VERTIGO
BLADDER & BOWEL PROBLEMS
COGNITIVE & EMOTIONAL CHANGES[2]



There is currently no cure for MS, however, early and appropriate treatment can markedly

REDUCE DISEASE ACTIVITY

and accumulation of disability, potentially allowing for a more independent lifestyle.[3]



People living with MS and their healthcare teams should ensure the

FULL RANGE OF DISEASE-MODIFYING THERAPIES

are discussed to agree on the treatment that will help

PROVIDE THE BEST OUTCOME[3]

MS is unpredictable, but people living with MS, together with their families, should be

EMPOWERED TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT THE TREATMENT & CARE THEY RECEIVE[4]

A holistic management approach is important to allow people to

LIVE AS INDEPENDENTLY AS POSSIBLE[5]

and people with MS should take an

ACTIVE ROLE IN ENGAGING WITH THEIR HEALTHCARE TEAM[3]

Family life

Although MS is not directly inherited, the disease contains a hereditary component and in a family where one parent has MS

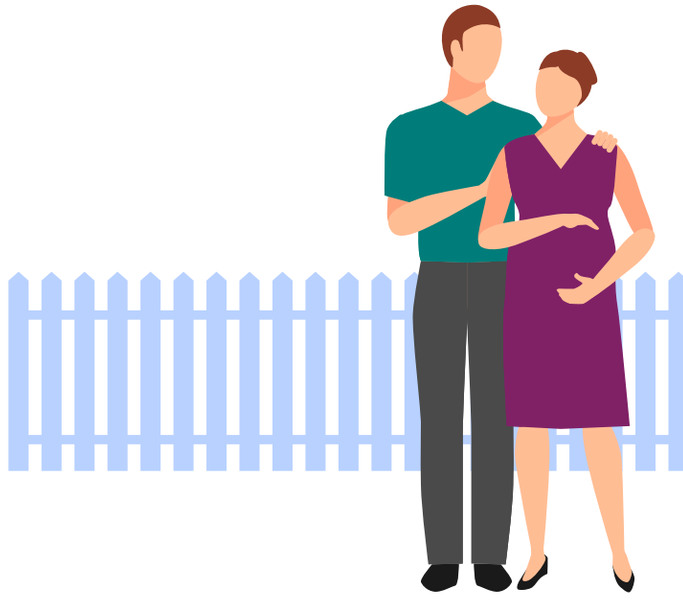
LIVING WITH MS POSES CHALLENGES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL & OTHERS AROUND THEM PARTICULARLY THEIR FAMILY[6]

CHILDREN ARE 2 TO 5% MORE LIKELY TO GET MS[7]

The most common form of MS, relapsing multiple sclerosis (RMS), is often diagnosed

BETWEEN THE AGES OF 20 & 40[8]

a time when people with MS may be thinking of starting a family.[1]



A multidisciplinary treatment approach including access to a broad range of specialists such as

NURSES
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SPEECH THERAPISTS
INFORMATION
ADVICE & EDUCATION

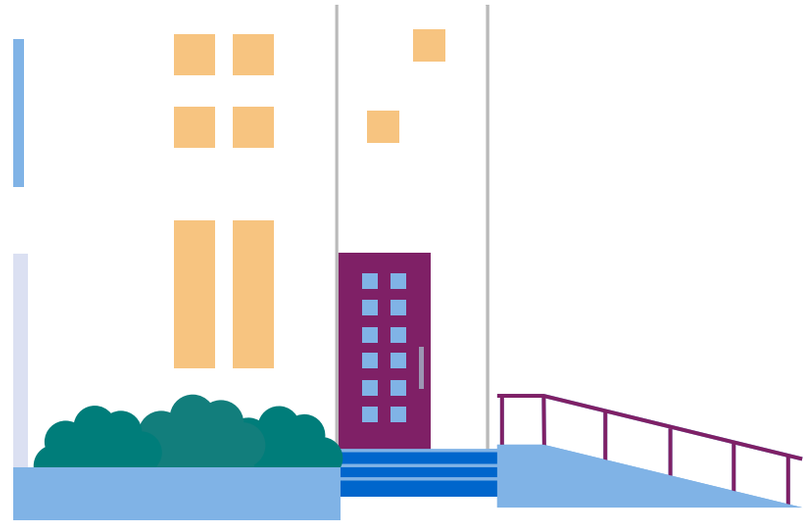
should be provided to encourage self-management and independence.[4]

Mobility and access

ADAPTATIONS OF HOMES & LIFESTYLE

may be needed, but

SUPPORT FROM OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS CAN HELP MAKE EVERYDAY LIFE EASIER



Many people with MS wait until they have significant disability before using assistive devices or making adaptations to their home which may

MAKE MOBILITY & INDEPENDENCE EASIER[9]

but studies have shown that people who use them are

LESS FATIGUED & EXPERIENCE BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE[9]

Working with MS

ON AVERAGE 37% OF PEOPLE WITH MILD MS ARE

but more than

75% OF PEOPLE

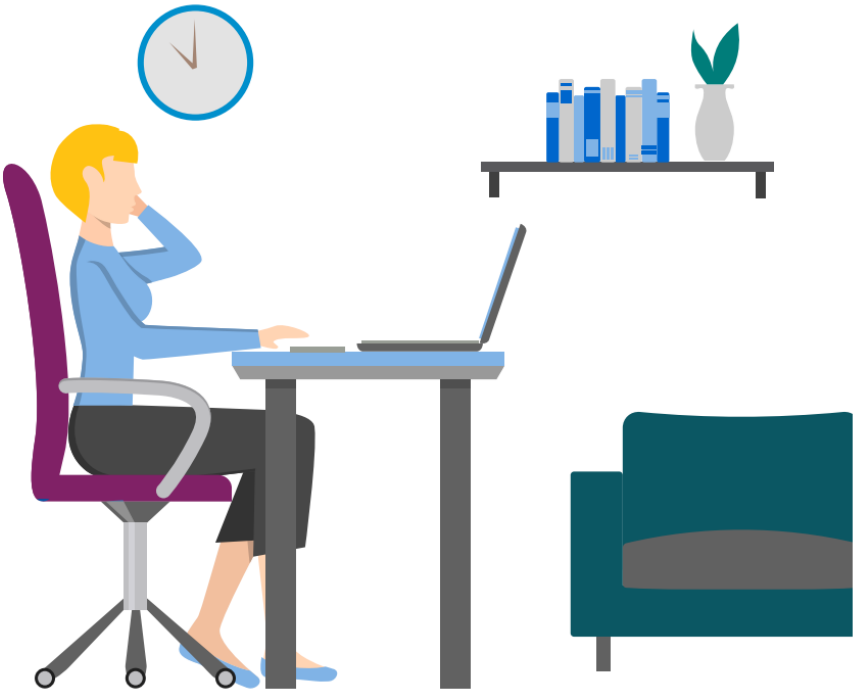
EMPLOYED[10]

with MS report that the condition has impacted their

EMPLOYMENT & CAREER OPPORTUNITIES[10]

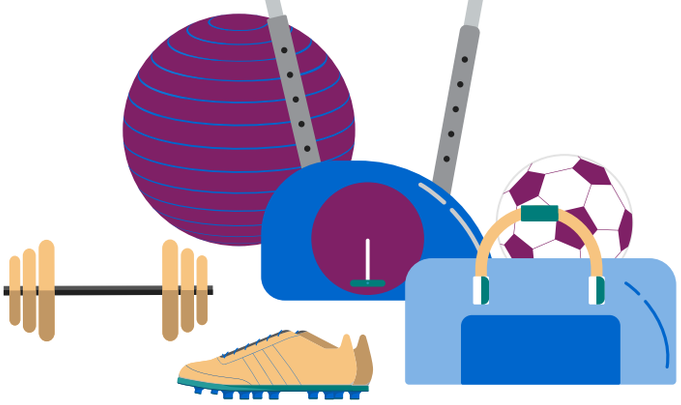
Many people living with MS want to work.

ADAPTATIONS SUCH AS FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS & SCHEDULED BREAKS CAN ENABLE INDIVIDUALS TO REMAIN WORKING FOR LONGER[5]



Physical activity and leisure

EXERCISE & REGULAR



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

are important for general health and well-being.

The benefits of exercise for people with MS are proven, including

REDUCED FATIGUE LEVELS & IMPROVED STRENGTH & MOBILITY[11]

Exercise is also thought to prevent cognitive decline in people with MS.[12]

EDUCATION READING & HOBBIES

when pursued over a lifetime, have been shown to

ENHANCE COGNITIVE RESERVE

in people with MS and should be prioritized day-to-day.[13,14]

Receiving an MS diagnosis can feel like the end of 'normal' life which is why it is so important that

PROGRAMMES
POLICIES &
SERVICES
EDUCATE
PEOPLE WITH
MS & ENABLE
EMPOWERMENT
& INDEPENDENCE[4]

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