

# Discharge Instructions for Multiple Sclerosis



You have been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). This is a disease of the brain, the spinal cord, or both. MS destroys the covering (myelin sheath) of the nerves. When the nerves are damaged, messages can't travel to and from the brain as fast or at all. As a result, you may not be able to move your body as well as you did before. You may lose some of your ability to feel things, such as heat or cold. Some people may have vision problems or trouble emptying their bladder. Here are things you can do to feel better.

## Activity

Do's and don'ts:

- Get plenty of rest. Extreme tiredness is a common symptom of MS.
- Plan your activities in advance so you won't get too warm.
- Stay out of excessive heat.
- Use a cane or other aid to help you get around and save your energy, if needed.
- Try stretching. It can help ease stiff muscles.
- Exercise. Aerobic exercise may help your strength, muscle tone, balance, and coordination. A physical therapist can help you learn which exercises are safe for you.
- Try swimming. This exercise may not increase your temperature. Don't swim alone.

## Other home care

More do's and don'ts:

- Take your medicine exactly as directed by your healthcare provider. Don't skip doses.
- Don't soak too long in hot tubs or hot baths. It could make your muscles become weak. Don't get in a hot tub unless there's someone nearby who can pull you out if needed.
- Move into a cooler place for a few hours if you get too hot and your symptoms get worse. This will help you return to normal.
- Put an air conditioner in a window or elsewhere in your home if you don't already have one.
- Eat a well-balanced diet. Talk to your healthcare provider about taking vitamins. If you have trouble swallowing, ask what foods you should eat and what not to eat.
- Prevent constipation. To do this:
  - Eat a diet high in fiber.
  - Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water every day, unless directed otherwise.
  - Use an over-the-counter laxative as directed by your provider.
- Let your healthcare provider know:
  - About any pain you're having
  - About any sexual issues you're having

- If you laugh or cry for no reason (such as crying when you're really happy)
- If you feel sad or depressed
- If you lose control of your urine (incontinence)
- Your provider may tell you about other things to look out for depending on what medicines you take.

## Follow-up care

Make a follow-up appointment with your healthcare provider as advised.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Extreme tiredness or increasing weakness
- Confusion or unusual behavior
- New nervous system symptoms, such as weakness or numbness in the face, arms, or legs
- Double vision or loss of vision
- Trouble urinating or a change in the color or odor of your urine
- Fever over 100.4°F (38°C)

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