



This publication has been adapted from MS LifeLines.



You may get a lot of help from the people close to you. By talking openly and honestly about your multiple sclerosis (MS), you can best help them support you.

Six things close family and friends can help with:

1. Offering emotional support you can count on.
2. Making decisions for medical, financial, and other issues.
3. Everyday household chores, responsibilities, and other activities.
4. Taking you to medical appointments and helping you communicate with your doctor.
5. Keeping records of your symptoms, medications, and questions.
6. Keeping track of your treatment schedule.

Talking to your partner

If you are married or in a committed relationship, MS can bring unexpected challenges and surprising rewards. Working together to overcome obstacles can bring you and your partner closer together. But it does require shared commitment and effort.

As you take on MS together, don't forget to set aside some couple time and keep the lines of communication open.

Tips for care partners

If you're helping to care for someone with MS, you have a very important job. Besides helping in everyday ways, you can offer emotional support.

Here are some ways you can help your loved one:

1. Listen

- Hearing what your loved one says shows that you care
- When your loved one confides in you, it means they value your support

2. Communicate

- Ask your loved one how you can best help them
- Find out if they need physical support, emotional support, or both
- Talk about how you can be supportive to help both of you plan for the future

3. Learn about MS

- Become educated about MS and how it's treated so you can try to relate and give better support

4. Be by their side

- Whether it's in the doctor's office or during an in-home nurse visit, help by taking notes and asking questions



Care partners need support too



Taking care of your loved one with MS can be very stressful. Be sure not to ignore your own needs.

Talk openly and honestly about your needs

- Share your feelings with your loved one and let them know if you're having any problems. Your needs are important, too, and your loved one will understand.

Take a break when you need one

- Being a good care partner starts with your well-being. See if any other family members or friends can step in when you need a break.

Take care of yourself

- Eating a healthy diet, exercising, and having regular medical exams will ensure you're in the best shape possible. Pay attention to changes in your mood and seek help if you need.

Have a hobby

- Some people like to work creatively on things, like paper crafts or cards. Others prefer more physical hobbies, like softball. No matter what you like to do, it's important to find an outlet to keep stress levels under control.

Let your loved one help out

- Just because someone has MS doesn't mean they're incapable of doing things for themselves. It can be good to find tasks they can do. If they're able to cook for themselves, you can switch to plastic dishes and put everything they need to prepare a meal within reach.

Take advantage of small moments

- Make the most of any time you can get to yourself, even if it's just a few minutes. It could be while you're walking the dog or going to get the mail, or even on your daily commute. Use that time to listen to podcasts, read, or catch up on your correspondence.

Talk to other care partners

- Being able to talk to someone who understands what it's like to be a care partner can go a long way. They may know why you're stressed out and why it may take you time to decompress.



Explaining MS to kids

If you're a parent or family member living with MS, you may have concerns about talking to kids about your condition. You might wonder how much you should tell them, or if telling them about your MS will confuse or scare them. It's natural to want to protect them, but when it comes to talking to kids, honesty may be the best policy.

Talking to your kids

Children are bound to have lots of questions about MS. What is MS? Can I catch MS from you? How will MS affect me? Try to answer truthfully in an age-appropriate way. You may also want to reassure the kids that they can't "catch MS." It's not like a cold. If children want to know how MS will affect them and your family, be honest. MS is different for every person. Although you can't tell kids exactly what to expect, you can still prepare them for possibilities.

Try to remember that kids are adaptable. The key is open communication. As long as they have the facts and feel reassured, most children can adjust to just about anything.

Talking to your friends

Disclosing your MS to others is a personal decision. Whether you decide to tell others about your MS is up to you. There is no right or wrong way to talk about it. Tailor information as you see fit to the individual and the situation. Over time, you'll be able to gauge the reactions of different friends to determine if, when, and how much you want to disclose.



Relationships with MS

If you or a loved one has MS, you may wonder what that means for dating. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

Opening up

When you're getting to know someone, you may feel like talking about your MS. If so, bring it up! You may feel hesitant—some people have a lot of misconceptions about MS or it may be a new conversation for you. By bringing the topic out into the open, you can tell them about what living with MS is really like. It can help them know what you're going through and it may be an opportunity to bring you two closer.

The best night out may be an evening in

Going out can be great, but there's no place like home when you or your partner is low on energy. Fatigue is a common symptom of MS. It can come and go at any time. While this may not be convenient, keeping it in mind can help you adjust to make the most of a date night.

A cardigan may be better than jewelry

Necklaces, watches, and cufflinks can be great gifts; however, if you or your partner have MS, it may be hard to put on jewelry. MS can affect a person's dexterity. While it may be tempting to gift a pair of earrings, other items may be a better fit.

Dress for comfort

For some, heels are a part of dressing up; however, sometimes, MS can make it hard to walk in a straight line. Many people with MS experience issues with their balance and gait. High-heeled shoes may not help. In these situations, functional shoes can be a necessity.

Spontaneity is key

Sometimes, an unexpected gesture can sweep someone off their feet. However, when MS flares up unexpectedly, you or your partner may not want to travel much further than the couch. When scheduling a date, it's important to be flexible and make the most out of the days that you or your partner are feeling good.

Some people may think that MS means an end to dating; however, many people with MS are able to lead romantically fulfilling lives.