



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**
Northern California
Chapter

About the Northern California Chapter

Our Vision is: **A World Free of MS!**

Until that is our reality we will relentlessly pursue our mission: To mobilize people and resources to drive research for a cure and address the challenges of everyone affected by MS.

Our chapter serves over 140,000 people affected by MS in 40 Northern California counties. Chartered in 1954, we have offices in San Francisco, Sacramento and Santa Clara to serve our clients. Over 81 cents of every dollar raised directly funds programs and services for our clients in Northern California and cutting edge research to find a cure.

Our Impact

The Northern California Chapter empowers people with MS to live independently, enhance their health and improve their knowledge. We offer programs and services to address the wide range of issues facing people with MS and their families, including:

- Seminars and support for those newly diagnosed
- An *Information and Referral* service provides the cornerstone of delivery of information on MS treatment options, managing symptoms, financial planning, employment rights and care giving
- Educational events and workshops to effectively manage and live well with MS
- Community-based adaptive exercise classes to keep people moving including yoga, aquatics, strength training, horseback riding, dance and many others
 - Peer support and over 60 self-help groups to support emotional and social well being
 - A direct financial assistance program that provides a timely, customized approach to individuals and families in times of need
 - Care management services to help navigate a fragmented and confusing healthcare and social service delivery system

Research

The Society is the largest private sponsor of MS research in the world and has funded over \$644 million cumulative investment since 1947 when the first 3 grants were issued. We devote nearly \$34 million each year to a spectrum of key initiatives and other projects based on the guiding principles of Speed, Collaboration and Possibilities. Currently there is nearly \$12 million in active research grants that take place in Northern California institutions including UC San Francisco, UC Davis, The J. David Gladstone Institutes, Stanford University, and others.

Advocacy

The Northern California Chapter is a leader on the advocacy front has been recognized by the National MS Society for *Excellence in Activism*. In addition to being a principal leader in drafting the Society's *National Health Care Reform Principles*, advocates from our chapter have been effective voices at the state level on behalf of people living multiple sclerosis and other with chronic diseases and disabilities. Our advocacy is focused on: federal funding for MS research; comprehensive health care reform; disability rights; and promoting state and local public policies that are in the best interest of the disability community.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Donate. Volunteer. Participate in a Fundraising Event.

For more information about our chapter, visit www.msconnection.org

Multiple Sclerosis Facts

What is multiple sclerosis?

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, often disabling disease of the central nervous system. MS can cause blurred vision, loss of balance, poor coordination, slurred speech, tremors, numbness, extreme fatigue, problems with memory and concentration, paralysis, and blindness. The progress, severity and specific symptoms in any one person cannot yet be predicted, but advances in research and treatment give hope to those affected by MS.

Who gets MS?

Anyone may develop MS, but there are some patterns:

- Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50.
- 2/3 of people with MS are women.
- Studies indicate that genetic factors make certain individuals more susceptible than others, but there is no evidence that MS is directly inherited.
- MS occurs more commonly among people with northern European ancestry, but people of African, Asian, and Hispanic backgrounds are not immune.

How many people have MS?

Because it is not contagious, which would require U.S. physicians to report new cases, and because symptoms can be completely invisible, the numbers are estimated.

- Approximately 20,000 Northern Californians have been diagnosed with MS.
- More than 400,000 Americans have MS.
- Every week about 200 people are diagnosed.
- Worldwide, MS may affect 2.5 million individuals.

What are the typical symptoms of MS?

- Symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary from person to person and from time to time in the same person. For example: One person may experience abnormal fatigue, while another might have severe vision problems.
- A person with MS could have loss of balance and muscle coordination making walking difficult; another person could have slurred speech, tremors, stiffness, and bladder problems.
- In severe MS, people have partial or complete paralysis on a permanent basis.

Can MS be cured?

Not yet. However, there are now FDA-approved medications that have been shown to modify or slow down the underlying course of MS.

- Many therapeutic and technological advances are helping people manage symptoms and lead productive lives.
- Advances in treating and understanding MS are made every year and progress in research to find a cure is very encouraging.

How does the National MS Society help?

- Supports more MS research, offers more services for people with MS, provides more professional education programs and furthers more MS advocacy efforts than any other MS organization in the world.
- Since its founding in 1946, the Society has committed has invested \$600 million in MS research.
- Through its fifty-state network of chapters, assistance is provided to over a million people annually, including people with MS, their family members, employers and caregivers.

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