



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society
Mid-Atlantic
Chapter

Wellness and Multiple Sclerosis

For a person living with MS, optimizing wellness involves more than treatment of the disease. Equally important are the use of good nutrition, stress management, fitness and cognitive health strategies. For more information, call 1-800-344-4867.

Nutrition

Good nutrition is essential to everyone. For people with MS, diet can have additional importance—from helping to manage MS symptoms to possibly impacting progression of the disease.

- Consume 25-30 grams of fiber each day to promote good digestion and bowel health. Fiber is found in the cells of plants—foods like whole grains, nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruits.
- Cut back on saturated fat, found in highly marbled meat, the skin on poultry, butter, cheese and whole milk dairy products. Eat skinless chicken or turkey, lean meats

trimmed of visible fats or go meatless with vegetable protein from lentils, soy or nuts.

- Incorporate omega-3 fatty acids, found in mackerel, herring, albacore tuna and salmon. These may decrease the severity and duration of an MS attack.
- Eat 3-4 servings of whole-grain products daily, such as whole-grain bread and pasta, brown rice and rolled oats.
- Fill your plate daily with 4-6 servings of the colors of the rainbow: fruits and vegetables of red, orange, yellow, green and blue (such as red peppers, carrots, papaya, kale and blueberries) to get a good dose of vitamins and antioxidants.

For more information about nutrition, visit:

www.nutrition.gov

www.webmd.com/diet

www.nationalMSSociety.org - search "Nutrition"



Shelly, diagnosed in 2006

Stress Management

Stress can be caused by both pleasant and unpleasant demands and changes. Stress often evolves from the way we interpret situations and the way we relate to the world around us. Common signs of stress include changes in breathing, tight muscles, cold sweaty hands, and clenched teeth.

But people experience stress in different ways. In people with MS, some of the common signs of stress—fatigue and muscle tightness, for example—may also be symptoms of the disease. The key to taming stress is knowing what causes or increases your stress.

- Simplify your life. Ask yourself: Do I want to do a particular task? Does it need to be done perfectly? Does it need to be done at all?
- Plan ahead in situations that can cause stress and get extra sleep before family gatherings or important events.
- Learn to say no. You don't have to do anything if you don't have the time, energy or desire.
- Breathe slowly and deeply and remind yourself that you are a person—not a "multiple sclerosis patient."
- Do something you enjoy each day, schedule rest periods and do one thing at a time.

Visit these websites for more information:

www.apa.org/topics/stress

www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management

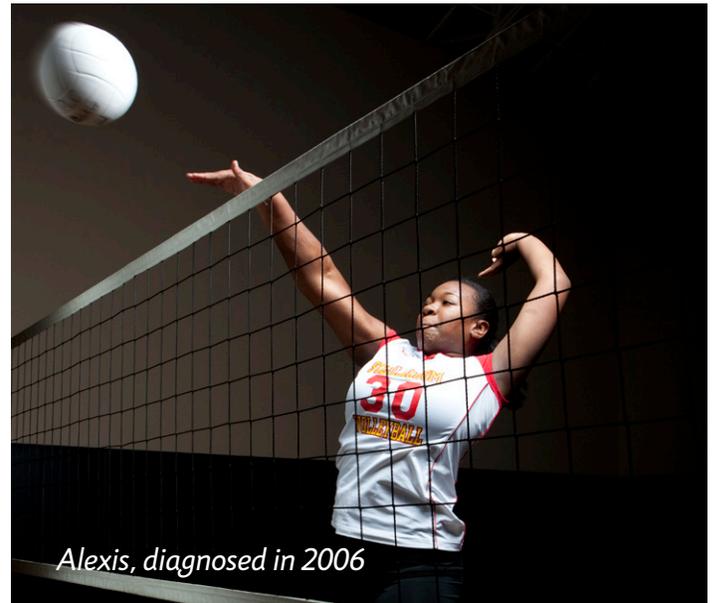
www.nationalmssociety.org - search "Stress"

Fitness

Regular physical exercise is good for body, mind and spirit. For people with MS, fatigue, weakness and lack of coordination are often everyday challenges.

Research has shown that regular aerobic

exercise—vigorous enough to raise the pulse and respiration rate—has many benefits. Exercise can increase fitness, arm and leg strength and workout capacity, as well as improve bowel and bladder control. Exercise has also been shown to reduce depression, fatigue and anger.



- Check with your physician prior to starting any exercise routine.
- You may also benefit from consulting a physical therapist who can design an exercise program that is customized for your individual needs and goals. The Mid-Atlantic Chapter provides financial assistance for qualified persons for a PT assessment.
- Find activities that you enjoy so you will continue to do them. Try to incorporate activities that address aerobic endurance, stretching, strengthening, balance and coordination—such as water aerobics, yoga, free weights, and Swiss ball activities. Remember all activities can be adapted to your ability.
- Try to get into a regular routine.

- Track your exercise successes and don't forget to warm up and cool down.
- Rest throughout the exercise routine and make sure to keep some energy in your reservoir for after the exercise.
- If you're heat sensitive, make sure to stay hydrated with cold water throughout the exercise routine. You may also use cooling gear such as vests, bandanas, misters, etc., to keep you cool.

Visit these websites for more information:

<http://fitness.gov>

www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise

www.nationalmssociety.org - search "Exercise"

new, give yourself extra time to practice

- Plan your most challenging cognitive tasks for your best time of the day
- Keep challenging your mind with puzzles, reading, stimulating conversation, video games, etc.
- Work on focus and concentration. Sometimes we "forget" things because we never actually learned them

Visit these websites for more information:

www.mysmyway.com/mybraingames

www.lumosity.com/personal-training-plan

www.nationalmssociety.org - search "Cognitive Function"

Cognitive Health

Cognition refers to the high level functions carried out by the brain, including attention, memory, planning, problem solving, visual perception, comprehension and speech.

Cognitive functions can become impaired due to aging, disease or injury. They can also be affected temporarily by tension, emotional stress, depression, sleep disturbances, menopause, fatigue, nutrition and some medications.

- Where memory is weak, try substituting organization. Get a loose-leaf organizer and learn to use it consistently as your information center
- When you are trying to learn something



Ray, diagnosed in 2003

This information has been taken in part from National MS Society publications: "Food for Thought: MS and Nutrition," "Exercise as a Part of Everyday Life," "Taming Stress in Multiple Sclerosis," and "Solving Cognitive Problems." To order these free booklets, call 1-800-344-4867.