



“Try on MS” Toolkit

An Awareness and Educational Activity

Many people do not understand what multiple sclerosis is. Through “Try on MS,” volunteers help the general public better understand the symptoms or prognosis of multiple sclerosis and its impact on someone’s everyday life. Using common household items as props, they help community members learn more about MS.

It is easy to host “Try on MS”. To help prepare, first watch this video from the Greater Northwest Chapter’s 2010 MS Awareness Week. The video is found at - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vIBFDpj4wk>.

Please make sure to share how you used this Toolkit and the outcomes of your experience by emailing GetInvolved@nmss.org. Please send photos if possible.

Where to use the “Try on MS” toolkit:

- MS Awareness Week, March 11-18, 2012
 - At a local mall/shopping center, library, school student center, or other well trafficked space (IMPORTANT: Be sure to contact the supervisor or manager of the location beforehand for permission, etc.)
- Walk MS or Bike MS: promote events and recruit members for your team
 - Community fundraising event
 - Team events

Personnel: For most venues, a team of 2-3 volunteers is all that is needed.

- Moderator – preferably a person living with MS open to sharing his/her story
- Greeter(s) – 1 or 2 people
- Optional: Booth – 1 or 2 people to help pass out basic informational materials and various Society publications are available from the Chapter

Props: Most are easy to find at local thrift shops, home improvement store or you may have something similar in your home.

- High heel shoe, ski boot (foot drop)
- Swim flippers (balance)
- Wide belt or leg brace (spasticity)
- Thick rubber gloves and button-down shirt (numbness)
- Sun or Safety Glasses with scratched lenses or covered in Vaseline or tape (vision problems)
- Thick foam cushion (dizziness/vertigo)
- Leg and/or arm weights (fatigue)

Scripts: Several different scripts are provided below. Please adjust as needed to suit the audience.

Greeters

- “Are you familiar with MS?”
- “Have you heard of multiple sclerosis?”
- “We’re volunteers with the National MS Society and we’re here today to spread awareness about MS.”
- “We’d like to invite you to learn a bit about MS and even experience some of the symptoms first hand.”
- “Thank you so much for your time today!”

During team recruitment or community fundraising event:

- “We are recruiting (raising funds) for our Walk MS/Bike MS team.”

During MS Awareness Week:

- “Did you know it is ‘National Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week?’”

Moderator

- “Hello, my name is _____. Thank you for taking a couple minutes to learn about MS!”
- “Do you know anything about MS?”
- “We’d like to invite you to learn a bit about MS and even experience some of the symptoms first hand. This should only take five minutes of your time.”
- “MS is a disease of the central nervous system, so that includes the brain, spinal cord and optic nerves.”
- “We think that MS may be an ‘autoimmune’ disease. With autoimmune diseases, the immune system attacks healthy tissue.”
- “MS is not contagious, so you can’t catch it from someone else.”
- “Symptoms can range from numbness and tingling to paralysis or loss of vision.”

(Moderators can share some of the common symptoms that they experience as examples)

- “MS symptoms are unpredictable and vary from person to person and from time to time within the same person.”
- “More than 400,000 Americans live with MS and Utah/Idaho has one of the highest incidence rates of MS.”
- “At this time, no one knows what causes MS and there is no cure, but the National MS Society funds research to find a cure as well as help people impacted by the disease.”

Use props to demonstrate symptoms

Today we want to give you the opportunity to ‘Try on MS’.

- **Foot drop:** (high heels) “Sometimes people with MS have difficulty lifting or flexing their foot, and this can greatly affect the way they walk.”

- **Balance:** (flippers) “People with MS can experience difficulties with balance, resulting in a swaying or ‘drunken’ type of walk.”
- **Spasticity:** (belt or leg brace) “people with MS can experience muscle tightness and stiffness called ‘spasticity’. With spasticity a person can experience muscle spasms or sudden muscle movements.”
- **Numbness:** (kitchen gloves while buttoning shirt) “Numbness of face, body, arms and legs is one of the most common symptoms of MS.”
- **Vision Problems:** (blotchy, blurry glasses) “Vision problems are common in people with MS and can cause blurring, blindness in one eye or dark spots in vision.”
- **Dizziness/Vertigo:** (cushions) “People with MS may feel off balance or lightheaded, affecting their equilibrium and ability to feel ‘grounded’.
- **Fatigue:** (leg/arm weights) “Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms of MS, occurring in about 80% of people.”

Questions to ask to participants wearing props and trying to walk around

- What does it feel like?
- Can you imagine living with this symptom?
- What advice would you give to a person experiencing this symptom?

At Booth

- “We are volunteers with the National MS Society . . .
 - educating about multiple sclerosis during National MS Awareness Week
 - recruiting for our Walk MS/Bike MS/MuckRuckus MS team
 - raising funds for (your Walk MS/Bike MS/MuckRuckus MS or group for the National MS Society).”
- “We want to educate the community about multiple sclerosis.”
- “We’re asking people to help us MOVE IT to end MS now. We want to spread the word about MS and how you can make a difference in the lives of people with MS in your community.”
- “The National MS Society Utah-Southern Idaho Chapter (or local office) educates, inspires and empowers more than 46,200 people impacted by MS including people with MS, friends, caregivers and health care professionals in Utah and southern Idaho. “
- “We create innovative programs to meet the needs of people with MS and their families, host exciting fundraising events to give supporters a meaningful role in the MS movement, and fund cutting-edge research into treatments and a cure. With a passion for bringing about a world free of MS, we help everyone affected by the disease to live richer, healthier, more independent lives.”
- Provide info about the Walk MS/Bike MS.
- “For more information, please contact the local Chapter at 1-800-344-4867, press option 1 or online at www.cureMSUtah.org or www.cureMSIdaho.org.”

Thank you for helping to spread awareness about MS!

**This Toolkit was kindly created by the Greater Northwest Chapter of the National MS Society.*