



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society
Greater
Northwest
Chapter

“Try on MS” Toolkit An Awareness and Educational Activity

Although MS is more prevalent in the Northwest than almost anywhere else in world, many people still do not understand the symptoms or prognosis of the disease.

Through “Try on MS,” volunteers use everyday props to help community members learn more about MS. To help prepare, watch the video from the 2010 MS Awareness Week at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vIBFDpj4wk>.

Before beginning any outreach activity, please review the “Welcome Kit” materials for information about the Greater Northwest Chapter and the National MS Society. This kit and additional publications and information are available from the Chapter. Contact the Chapter at 1-800-344-4867, press option 1 or email MSnorthwest@nmss.org.

Where to use the “Try on MS” toolkit:

- Walk MS or Bike MS: promote events and recruit members for your team
 - Community fundraising event
 - Team wrap-around events
- MS Awareness Week, March 14-20, 2011
 - At a local mall or shopping center (be sure to contact beforehand for permission, etc.)

Personnel: for most venues, a team of 2-3 is all that is needed:

- Moderator (preferably a person living with MS)
- Greeter(s)— (1 or 2 people)
- Optional: Booth (1 or 2 people)—basic materials and publications are available from the Chapter

Props: most are easy to find at local thrift shops or home improvement store

- High heels (foot drop)
- Flippers (balance)
- Wide belt or leg brace (spasticity)
- Thick rubber gloves and button shirt (numbness)
- Sun or Safety Glasses with scratched lenses (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, referring to the Chapter's "Welcome Kit" for additional information on messaging.

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 '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 the Northwest actually has an especially high rate of people with 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."

Use props to demonstrate symptoms

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

- **Foot drop:** (one high heel) "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:** (back brace, wide tight 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:** (rubber kitchen gloves, button up shirt, laced shoe—trying to button or tie shoe with gloves on) "Numbness of face, body, arms and legs is one of the most common symptoms of MS."
- **Vision Problems:** (blotchy, blurry glasses—paint with nail polish or add black marker spots) "Vision problems are common in people with MS and can cause blurring, blindness in one eye or dark spots in vision."
- **Dizziness/Vertigo:** (foam cushion—spin in a circle then try to stand on cushion) "People with MS may feel off balance or lightheaded, affecting their equilibrium and ability to feel 'grounded'."
- **Fatigue:** (leg/arm weights—wear while trying to do an activity) "Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms of MS, occurring in about 80% of people."

Questions to ask

- 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 with the National MS Society . . .
 - celebrating MS Awareness Week
 - recruiting for our Walk MS/Bike MS team
 - raising funds for _____."
- "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, Greater Northwest Chapter educates, inspires and empowers over 12,000 people living with MS and more than 72,000 others including friends, caregivers and health care professionals in Western and Central Washington and Alaska."
- "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 Greater Northwest Chapter at 1-800-344-4867, press option 1 or online at www.MSnorthwest.org.”