

## **Multiple Sclerosis (commonly known as MS)**

### **What is MS?**

MS is an autoimmune disease of the central nervous system that affects around 100,000 people in the UK. MS causes the immune system that normally fights infection to think that the myelin sheath around nerve fibres and axons is foreign and to attack it. This interrupts messages to and from the brain, via the spinal cord and the complex system of nerves that connect to muscles and other body parts. Messages become distorted, slow down, fail to get through completely or short-circuit causing problems with a variety of movements, sensory perception, emotions, thinking and the function of body parts. The myelin sheath can partially or completely heal if the inflammation reduces. If not, scarring (plaques) can occur and the damage becomes more permanent.

### **Who gets MS?**

MS is more common in women than men, other than primary progressive MS that affects equal numbers of older people. Diagnosis occurs mostly between the ages of 20-40 years although a first episode can occur in children (rare) and senior citizens. It is 100 times more prevalent in the northern hemisphere than equatorial countries.

### **Are some personalities more prone to MS?**

In his book 'Multiple Sclerosis – the Facts' Professor Bryan Matthews stated that people who get MS tend to be hard working, healthy, stoic and put up with things others wouldn't. Another study suggested that they were often very fit. Maybe they push themselves too hard!

### **Diagnosis**

It is not easy to diagnose MS as there is no single test and symptoms can be similar to other diseases. A 'clinical diagnosis' is made from an examination, medical history, results of a number of tests, often an MRI scan and the elimination of other conditions.

### **Types of MS**

- **One episode of illness** - some people may only ever experience one 'attack' of MS
- **Benign MS** – this label is given to people with very little or no disability who have not deteriorated after 10-20 years. They may still have relapses and some problems.
- **Relapsing Remitting MS** – the majority of people are initially diagnosed with 'relapsing remitting MS' where attacks are followed by remissions. Symptoms may improve and sometimes disappear. Invariably they fail to recover to the level they were at before the exacerbation.
- **Secondary Progressive** – some people's diagnosis will change to 'secondary progressive MS' when they have continued to deteriorate for 6 months.
- **Primary Progressive** - only a small number, usually diagnosed when they are older,

have 'primary progressive MS' where they experience increasing disability and a steady worsening of symptoms. Their MS is progressive from the beginning with no remissions or relapses.

### **Can other illnesses mimic MS?**

Hughes Syndrome, often referred to as 'Sticky Blood Syndrome', mimics MS as many symptoms are the same or similar and has sometimes mistakenly been diagnosed as MS. A blood test is now available to diagnose Hughes Syndrome. (See article on 'Hughes Syndrome' in MSRC New Pathways magazine - reference below).

### **What causes MS?**

Despite having been identified over 100 years ago and with considerable research since, the cause/s of MS are still unknown. Orthodox medicine currently highlights genetics, viruses and environmental factors as playing a part.

### **Genetics**

There is a strong relationship between our genes and our susceptibility to diseases like MS. Genes alone cannot be solely responsible for MS as the increase has been far too rapid. There is convincing evidence that gene expression and activation, influenced by our environment, is more important than the actual genes themselves. If we provide our body with the optimum environment e.g. through correct nutrition, freedom from stress and adequate Vitamin D we have a much better chance of expressing the right genes. Not all genes are active and they can be switched on and off by changing the environment. In cancer research, for example, Dr T. Colin Campbell found that bad genes could be switched off by reducing the amount of animal protein ingested.

### **Susceptibility**

Genes give us our susceptibility to certain illnesses. In homeopathy that susceptibility with other factors activates the collection of symptoms that orthodox medicine labels MS. It also determines which miasm/s are activated (we all have them). Miasm is a homeopathic term that describes a "predisposition towards chronic disease underlying the acute manifestations of illness," transmittable from one generation to another (Dr George Vitoulkas<sup>2</sup>). It/they can be treated with the corresponding homeopathic nosode prepared from pathological tissue.

Although we do not inherit MS directly the fact that family members share their genes, susceptibility and environment means their chances of getting MS are increased though incidences of familial cases of MS are very low.

### **Viruses**

Various viruses have been suggested by orthodox medicine as being responsible for MS but nothing has been proven. It has been suggested that they could be the trigger that initiates MS. Chronic diseases like MS do not just appear and have been building up for a long time before symptoms are felt.

Electro-acupuncture (EAP) is a German diagnostic non-invasive test that checks the body for pathogens (viruses, bacteria, fungi, parasites) and miasms. Treatment with vibrational homeopathy clears pathogens and renders miasm/s (more than one may be active) dormant. The condition for many people with MS has improved or stabilized with this treatment but unfortunately there are very few practitioners in this country.

### **Is prolonged emotional stress a risk?**

Stress causes and is intimately linked to many diseases. It is not the event or situation itself that creates stress but our subsequent thought processes and accompanying emotions. In response to strong emotions like fear our body initiates its emergency 'fight or flight response' which is designed to cope with short-term stress only. When stress is prolonged (chronic) the many changes this induces are harmful and cause a further deterioration in health or illness.

Our thought processes also affect the immune system which fights infection. Immune cells are thinking cells that communicate with the other systems in our body e.g. respiratory, digestive and nervous systems (Dr Candace Pert). Thinking healthy, positive thoughts in a calm, relaxed body stimulates the body's healing system. Negative thinking and stress weaken the immune system, stop the free flow of energy necessary for wellness and prevent maximum absorption of energy from food. These leave us more vulnerable to illness.

### **Does environment increase risk?**

When people move from a low to a high incidence environment they have the same genes but their risk of getting MS increases or decreases to the same level as the rest of the population e.g. if they eat the same diet or live in areas with the same amount of sun. Changing the environment before adolescence changes that risk markedly. Environment can change both gene chemistry as well as DNA

### **Do certain foods increase the risk and progression of MS?**

Dr Roy Swank followed people with MS and their diets for 34 years and concluded that the progression of MS, even in more severe cases, was markedly reduced with a diet low in saturated fats especially those from animal based foods <sup>1</sup>. His studies have been confirmed and extended by many scientists in many countries.

Dr Campbell has done in-depth studies of diets and illnesses throughout the world and found that the western diet of meat, fish and dairy products is related to the increasing number of cancers, heart disease, diabetes and autoimmune diseases of which MS is one. Ingestion of cows' milk with its protein and calcium is strongly associated with MS. We are told that we need milk for calcium but we get more than enough in a balanced diet.

Dr Campbell claims that the plant based diet that prevents diseases like MS can also reverse, slow or stop them. Therefore, eliminating dairy products, meat, fish and foods high in saturated fats in exchange for a plant based diet can have a very positive effect on MS progression and prevention. Food choices affect all areas of our 'being' including energy levels and metabolism.

## **Are Omega 6 & Omega 3 Essential Fatty Acids (E.F.A) Important?**

E.F.A's are essential and present in every cell in the body. The body cannot make them so they come from the food we eat. Research has shown that white matter in the brains of people with MS are deficient in E.F.A's. Other studies show E.F.A.'s are low in the myelin sheath around the nerves, red and white blood cells, platelets and blood plasma.

E.F.A's go through several stages of conversion before they can be utilized by different parts of the body. It is believed that for people with MS something has gone wrong in this process at the stage where linoleic acid converts to gamma-linoleic acid. Research at the Nuffield Laboratories in London showed that gamma-linoleic acid given as evening primrose oil capsules was capable of altering abnormal cell membranes, including those in myelin returning them to normal.

The recommended dose is 6x 500mg capsules per day either 2 three times a day or 3 twice a day.

## **Why is Vitamin D considered important?**

Vitamin D helps prevent cells from becoming diseased. Incidences of MS are higher in countries with increasing latitude where there is less sunlight. The sun's ultraviolet rays on the skin make Vitamin D - a few hours exposure a week is sufficient. This is stored in our liver and body fat for 20 days or more. When needed it is converted into 'supercharged Vitamin D' (1,25D). This is 1,000 times more active than stored Vitamin D and lasts for only 6-8 hours, hence the need for continual replacement. Limited exposure to sunlight means that Vitamin D blood levels could be low. 'Supercharged vitamin D' levels are reduced by animal protein that increases blood acidity interfering with the production of 1,25D. Animal protein and too much calcium reduce blood levels of 1,25D.

Vitamin D is also available in some foods, e.g. oily fish, and often as an additive in breakfast cereals and fortified milk. Some supplements contain Vitamin D but it is not absorbed so well. Supercharged Vitamin D is too powerful and too dangerous to make as a supplement. Dr Campbell advises that if Vitamin D is needed the lowest possible dose should be taken.

It is worth having your Vitamin D levels checked. The best test is a blood test called 25(OH)D. Marc Sorenson and Dr William Grant consider a level of 33-100 ng/ml sufficient. Practitioners at 'The Sanctuary' in Blackburn, England have found that a minimum of 100ng/ml is required for people with MS.

## **Why could Vitamin B12 be important?**

B12 is needed for the formation of haemoglobin that carries oxygen through the body. It is important in energy production, healthy cell metabolism and is essential for the brain and nervous system. It is mostly found in animal products and in micro-organisms in the soil. Deficiency may be due to a vegetarian/vegan diet or an inability to absorb it properly which can be hereditary. Sterile soil and over-clean vegetables do not help.

Some Vitamin B12 deficiency symptoms resemble those of MS e.g. fatigue, dizziness, tingling and numbness. It is worth getting your B12 levels checked as some people with MS have had considerable improvement in energy and a variety of symptoms, including walking, when having regular B12 injections.

## **What Symptoms can occur in MS?**

### **Physical Symptoms**

These can include numbness, tingling, loss of muscle strength, paralysis, balance problems, walking difficulties, problems with co-ordination and dexterity, spasm, stiffness, and ataxia (involuntary movements and loss of co-ordination). Pain, weakness, problems with bladder and/or bowel control, speech difficulties, visual problems including optic neuritis and physical and mental tension are also possible.

Breathing provides most of our energy and tends to be poor in disabling diseases like MS. Chronic hypo-ventilation (under-breathing) is very common.

### **Mental Symptoms**

These include difficulty with concentration and memory, too much thinking and stress.

### **Emotional Disturbances**

These include depression, anxiety, mood swings, being brought to tears easily, frustration, anger and fear. They may be temporary, e.g. after diagnosis or an exacerbation, or more long-term.

## **Is MS fatigue different from tiredness?**

MS fatigue is different and far worse than the tiredness that most people experience. It is a major problem for many people with MS and is difficult for others to understand. It makes mental and/or physical activity difficult and sometimes impossible.

## **How long do symptoms last?**

Symptoms vary in severity and duration. When recovery is incomplete the nerve impulses remain interrupted leaving varying degrees of disability and weakness. Occasionally movement can return years after the attack. Most people learn to live with the problems, some continue to work and many have a reasonable quality of life managing their problems confidently and well.

## **Why yoga?**

Yoga has many benefits that can help improve health. It is something positive we can do for ourselves allowing us to maximise healing and move towards wellness.

Exercise can be very tiring for many people with MS whereas yoga normally increases energy and helps us deal with symptoms. It calms the mind and emotions, relieves stress and restores the natural breathing process essential for good health. It also maintains or increases strength and flexibility, improves bladder and bowel function and keeps the body moving whatever the level of disability. More information can be found

on the Yoga for Health and Education Trust website, [www.yoga-health-education.org.uk](http://www.yoga-health-education.org.uk) under 'Remedial/Therapeutic Yoga'.

### **Why is a remedial/therapeutic yoga class recommended?**

People with MS often find a general yoga class too tiring and therefore counter-productive. In remedial classes postures can be adjusted to suit individual needs for all kinds of problems and chronic fatigue ensuring that we get maximum benefit from our yoga practice to help improve our condition and well-being.

### **Remedial/therapeutic Yoga Teachers**

At present there are only a few trained remedial/therapeutic yoga teachers running classes for MS but the Yoga for Health and Education Trust hopes that by providing their new 'Yoga for Health – a therapeutic approach' teacher's course there will be more in the future. The trust has already run several very successful yoga courses for people with MS and Allied Conditions, in Cumbria and Essex and hopes to extend these throughout the country but we have found very few suitable venues to date.

### **Is yoga helpful for people with MS?**

Yoga is recognised as being valuable in the management of MS by the MS Society.

More than 5,000 people with MS took part in yoga courses specifically designed for them at the Yoga for Health Foundation in Bedfordshire, many of them returning repeatedly as they found it so valuable. Unfortunately, after 28 years, the Foundation closed in March 2006 when the lease expired and the property was sold. The Yoga for Health and Education Trust is continuing and developing this valuable work and hopes one day to have a centre. Visit [www.yoga-health-education.org.uk](http://www.yoga-health-education.org.uk) for more information.

There are yoga classes at some MS Therapy Centres and private classes with qualified teachers. Sue Lee runs remedial yoga classes in the Manchester area and retreats for people with MS. She also has a series of DVDs on Yoga for MS. Visit [www.yoga4pwms.co.uk](http://www.yoga4pwms.co.uk) for details.

A 'Yoga for MS' CD, containing two 30 minute sessions, is available from experienced remedial yoga teacher, Joy Frame who was the senior yoga teacher at YFHF for many years. Cost £5 including postage & packing. Email [joy.frame@googlegmail.com](mailto:joy.frame@googlegmail.com).

### **Websites for information and support**

<a href="http://www.mssociety.org.uk">www.mssociety.org.uk</a>	MS Society
<a href="http://www.mstrust.org.uk">www.mstrust.org.uk</a>	MS Trust
<a href="http://www.ms-selfhelp.org">www.ms-selfhelp.org</a>	MS Therapy Centres
<a href="http://www.msrc.co.uk">www.msrc.co.uk</a>	MS Resource Centre (MSRC )
	Magazine with positive contributions from people with MS.
	Previous magazines can be read on their website
<a href="http://www.b12d.org">www.b12d.org</a>	Information on Vitamin B12 deficiency
<a href="http://www.swankmsdiet.org">www.swankmsdiet.org</a>	Information on the Swank diet

**References**

The China Study  
Reversing Heart Disease  
Optimum Nutrition  
Molecules of Emotion  
MS - the Facts  
MS - self-help guide  
Optimum Nutrition Bible  
Vitamin D3 and Solar Power  
for Optimal Health  
Multiple Sclerosis Diet Book

<sup>1</sup> The China Study page 196

<sup>2</sup> The Science of Homeopathy  
page 130

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Free information booklets

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