



## STARTING A MEDICATION FOR MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Multiple sclerosis is a serious medical condition that causes inflammation in the brain and spinal cord. Inflammatory attacks (called *relapses*) can cause many symptoms, and can lead to permanent disability over the life-long course of the disease. All MS medications reduce these inflammatory flare-ups. That is why it's so important to start an MS medication – to try to minimize the damage caused by inflammation, and to maintain the health of your brain.

### BEFORE you start treatment:

- **Make sure your vaccinations are up-to-date.** MS medications alter your immune response, and some can suppress your immune system. You won't be able to have live-virus vaccines while taking certain MS medications.
- **Talk to your MS team if you are planning a pregnancy in the next few months.** If you are planning to become pregnant soon, it may be best to start treatment after the baby is born.

### Tell your doctor if:

- You have ever had chickenpox (or have been vaccinated for chickenpox)
- You have any infections, such as herpes (e.g. cold sores), or a respiratory infection (e.g. bronchitis, tuberculosis)
- You have any other medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, hypertension)

## Which MS medication is right for you?

No MS medication is right for everyone – there's no “one size fits all”. Some are taken by injection or intravenous infusion; some are taken as pills. Some are taken once or twice a day, while others are taken less frequently. Every medication also has its own “personality” – a profile of effects and side effects that's unique to that drug.

When you and your MS team are selecting the best medication for you, think about:

- 1 Will I be able to incorporate the treatment regimen into my lifestyle?
- 2 Will I be able to keep taking this drug in the months and years ahead?
- 3 What are the possible side effects of this drug? And are there any tips that will make it easier to take?
- 4 What is the long-term plan for my treatment? If my therapy isn't the right choice, what options do I have?

Starting an MS medication is a personal commitment – you will get the most from your treatment if you take it according to the schedule your doctor has given you. Staying with a treatment regimen can be a challenge. But with each dose you are assuring that you're doing the most you can to control your MS and live a healthier life. It's important to contact your nurse if you're experiencing any difficulties with your new medication, to help you to be successful on your treatment.