



MS Essential Tips

Is my treatment working?

Disease-modifying therapies (DMTs) used for multiple sclerosis are intended to slow down the disease process and prevent the development of worsening disability – the most important goals of treatment. DMTs reduce the amount of inflammation and tissue damage that occurs in MS. Since DMTs are preventative therapies, these medications will not necessarily help you feel better and should not be expected to provide relief of your MS symptoms. Talk to your doctor about other treatments that can provide symptom relief.

What will treatment do for my MS?

With treatment, you should experience little or no evidence of ongoing disease activity, such as relapses or new lesions on your MRI scan. Medications may also slow down disability progression (i.e. how quickly disability develops).

A treatment is considered to be ineffective if you continue to have inflammatory activity (i.e. ongoing relapses or new MRI lesions) or if you cannot adhere to the regimen because of side effects, financial issues or other problems.

Monitoring your MS treatment



What you can do:

- Take your medication as prescribed by your doctor. Tell your doctor or MS nurse if you are having problems with taking the drug.
- Report any relapses to your healthcare team. It is important to note the duration of the attack, its severity, and what parts of your body were affected.
- Keep track of your MS symptoms, especially new, severe or worrisome symptoms.
- Keep the appointments for the tests and procedures your doctor has recommended.

What your MS team will do:

- Perform neurological exams of your nerve and muscle function.
- Identify if there is worsening disability.
- Obtain periodic MRIs to identify inflammatory activity in your brain and spinal cord.
- Monitor the safety of your medication with blood tests and other procedures.
- Manage medication side effects if they occur. Your MS nurse can often advise you about how to minimize side effects.

Reporting Relapses

A relapse is a new neurological symptom (e.g. numbness) or a worsening of a previous symptom (e.g. nerve tingling) that persists for at least 24-48 hours.

Symptoms can worsen due to heat exposure (e.g. hot shower), exercise or infection (e.g. urinary tract infection). Symptoms can also feel worse if you are feeling stressed or fatigued. In these situations, you are probably not having a relapse and your symptoms will improve once your body has cooled down or the infection has cleared up.

A medication will need a bit of time to become effective. Once you are on treatment, if you have a relapse it may mean that this particular medication is not effective for you. Your neurologist may advise a change in treatment to better control your MS disease activity.



TIP

Keep a diary of your MS relapses so you have an accurate record of the frequency, severity and duration of your symptoms.