

## **Today is World MS Day**

Today, May 28, is World MS Day!

World MS Day was established by the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation in 2009 to raise awareness for the disease. Every year, individuals, groups and organizations work together to provide the public with awareness and education on MS and how it affects more than 2 million people worldwide. The theme for the campaign this year is "access" - meaning access to treatment, information, medication, and the same social and economic opportunities for people living with MS.

### **What is MS?**

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is one of the most common disorders affecting the central nervous system. It is an inflammatory condition that causes damage to myelin, which is a fatty material that insulates the nerves in our body. Myelin protects our nerves much like the covering of a power cord protects the electrical signals inside it. Myelination of the nerves allows for rapid conduction of nerve impulses and the speed and efficiency of these impulses permits smooth, controlled movement. Therefore, demyelination (the loss of myelin in diseases such as MS) interrupts the normal nerve impulses as they travel to and from the brain, which affects many different systems of the body. In the places where myelin is lost within the brain and spinal cord, scars develop - which is where Multiple Sclerosis gets its name: it means "many scars".

There are more than 2 million people who are living with MS worldwide and it affects more women than men. The exact cause of MS is unknown – it is not hereditary; however, genetics is thought to play a role in the development of the disease. The majority of people who are diagnosed with MS, are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40 years of age, and it is very rarely diagnosed in children under 12 years or in adults over 55 years.

The most common symptoms that patients with MS report is fatigue; however, there are a wide range of body systems that are affected and each MS patient may experience symptoms differently depending on which areas of the central nervous system are affected. The most common symptoms are pain, bladder and bowel dysfunction, movement, weakness and balance problems, visual and sensational problems, cognition, and mood changes.

There is no cure for MS but there are many therapies that can reduce relapses, relieve symptoms and improve the person's ability to function in their daily activities. There are a number of medications that can help and these are normally coupled with physical therapy and rehabilitation.

Be aware and share your awareness for MS and the people living with it every day!

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Information sourced from: Multiple Sclerosis International Federation and World MS Day

<http://www.msif.org/>

<http://worldmsday.msif.org/en#about-tab-about>