



Your MS and the Family Journey

The Multiple Sclerosis Association of America welcomes you to Your MS and the Family Journey. First, let's look at an overview of multiple sclerosis, or MS, and discuss what it is. MS is a neurological condition that affects the central nervous system. The protective layer around nerve fibers, called myelin, are affected, causing disruption between the brain and the rest of the body.

Symptoms of MS vary and may include: visual impairment, muscle weakness, loss of coordination, and mental health challenges. But, fortunately, you and your family have many MS therapeutic options to consider. Effective therapeutic options are available to help slow MS progression, help prevent relapse, and manage symptoms. Medications are available to slow disease activity and reduce relapses. MSAA offers a comprehensive online tool, called the Ultimate MS Treatment Guide, which compares all the FDA-approved MS treatments. To access this resource, simply visit: MStreatmentguide.org. But, one of the most important options is SUPPORT.

Let's take a look at what to expect after your MS diagnosis. An MS diagnosis can feel like coming to a crossroad. Your family members and care partners will also be on this journey with you, but remember: there is hope and you can always lean on MSAA for guidance. Embrace support together through learning, engaging with healthcare providers, being compassionate, and living with hope.

How can family dynamics be affected during your MS journey? An MS journey can sometimes change a family's routine. Activities may need to be adjusted to allow for fatigue, heat sensitivity, and mobility issues. Insightful information from your healthcare team could sometimes be a lot to understand, but MSAA resources are available to help. Support for you, your care partners, and other family members is key. Mobility, family planning, wellness, and other daily routines may also need consideration. You and your care partners can build a support system together, and MSAA can help.

Let's take a closer look at **how** to build that support system. Important things to keep in mind are:

1. Focusing on a healthy environment during this new journey
2. Fostering a healthy lifestyle for both you and your care partners
3. Consulting your healthcare team is vital, which includes medical support as well as physical, occupational, and speech therapies – plus individual and family counseling for optimal mental and emotional health
4. Embracing physical and emotional support to live a healthy, happy life
5. Utilizing MSAA to provide expert support and resources

Finally, let's take a look at some of those resources that MSAA provides. You can visit the MSAA website today where resources are available right at your fingertips. You can call, email, or chat on MSAA's Helpline

Monday through Friday, from 8:30am to 8pm Eastern. You can visit the “It’s a Generational Thing” toolkit, browse through MSAA’s numerous publications, and access MSAA’s resources in Spanish by calling 1-800-532-7667, extension 131, by emailing MSquestions@mymymsaa.org, or by visiting mymymsaa.org/espanol. In addition to the national Helpline, MSAA also offers cooling products, safety and mobility equipment, an MRI access program, educational webinars and podcasts, and the Ultimate MS Treatment Guide. We also offer helpful publications, the MS Conversations Blog, the My MSAA Community online forum, the My MS Manager mobile app, and the MSAA Art Showcase.

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