













UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS CENTER: PATIENT TIPS  
**Our patients often ask what lifestyle changes they can make in order to improve functioning. The optimal approach varies for each person. We suggest following the tips below:**

 <b>INFORMED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An informed patient can make better decisions and ask better questions</li> <li>• Ask your doctor and care team for education about updates in the field; attend educational programs (including those offered by our Center and online); the National MS Society (<a href="http://www.nationalmssociety.org">www.nationalmssociety.org</a>) website can also be an excellent resource for up-to-date education, research findings, advocacy and support.</li> <li>• Exploring research opportunities is also a way to stay informed about the cutting edge.</li> </ul>
 <b>CONNECTED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting with family, friends, and other patients with MS can be important means to restore our strength and fortitude.</li> <li>• Support groups: UCSF has a number of support groups including for patients with new diagnoses and with special needs (<i>link to site</i>)</li> <li>• There are also a number of local (<a href="http://www.nationalmssociety.org">www.nationalmssociety.org</a>) and online (<a href="http://patientslikeme.com">patientslikeme.com</a>, <a href="http://MyMSandME">MyMSandME</a>) support groups.</li> </ul>
 <b>MOVING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whatever your level of MS symptoms, incorporating physical activity into your life provides greater physical reserve and benefits many aspects of your health.</li> <li>• There are emerging data that heart healthy exercise (including if possible raising your heart rate to 70-80% of maximum) 3-4x week helps with facilitating your brain’s intrinsic capacity for repair and adapting to any disability you may have.</li> <li>• Discuss referrals to appropriate specialists (physical therapy, physical medicine specialist) with your doctor.</li> <li>• Adaptive equipment can be helpful.</li> <li>• Focus on strength, balance, flexibility, and coordination. Tailor exercise to your needs and what you enjoy.</li> <li>• Depending on your level of mobility, specific exercise modalities may include swimming, aqua therapy, or stationary bike. Light exercise in a controlled environment such as at a track or in a mall or museum may provide possible locations for activity.</li> <li>• Many patients report that feeling hot worsens their MS symptoms; for this reason you may prefer to exercise in the cooler hours, wear a passive cooling vest or workout in a pool. If heat does not bother you, then there is no specific concern or contraindication to being in the heat (it may temporarily aggravate symptoms but does not make MS worse).</li> <li>• Find a Neuro specialist PT in your area: go to <a href="http://www.APTA.org">www.APTA.org</a> and select “FIND A PT”. Look for someone specialized in Neurology or/ and who has NCS credentials.</li> </ul>
 <b>HELP FOR THINKING DIFFICULTIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many people with MS report difficulties with their thinking. These difficulties can arise from MS lesions, but also from lack of sleep, depressed mood, lack of activity and fatigue, which can be common in MS.</li> <li>• Talk to your doctor about strategies (pharmacological or otherwise) to improve sleep, mood, or fatigue.</li> <li>• Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can be helpful with targeted symptoms.</li> <li>• If warranted, your provider might refer you for neuropsychological assessment to identify specific troubles with your thinking and strategies to target them.</li> </ul>
 <b>SLEEP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many people with MS complain of troubles with their sleep.</li> <li>• Work with your doctor to address insomnia and specific symptoms (pain, spasticity, anxiety) that may contribute to keeping your up at night. Counseling may help.</li> <li>• Decreasing your intake of fluids starting in the late afternoon may decrease your frequency of urination at night.</li> <li>• Light-based therapy (blue light or otherwise) can help with fatigue in moderation.</li> </ul>

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 <p>REDUCING STRESSORS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no clear evidence that stress increases or causes MS disease activity, but stress can negatively affect well-being and make it harder to cope with MS related symptoms.</li> <li>• Incorporate a few moments during your day to “quiet your brain”, whether through informal “quiet time” or more formal methods (meditation, yoga, “mindfulness”).</li> <li>• Talk to your doctor about specific mindfulness programs and referrals to the Osher Institute at UCSF ( <a href="http://www.osher.ucsf.edu">www.osher.ucsf.edu</a>)</li> <li>• Use exercise and rest to tackle stress and improve your quality of life.</li> </ul>
 <p>HEALTHY EATING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific diets (except see vitamin D, below) have been proven to play a role in causing, managing or treating MS.</li> <li>• There is no evidence that gluten plays a role in MS specifically.</li> <li>• Focus on dietary modifications that feel good to you. Fad diets come and go. Your health is a long-term project. For now, we recommend a healthy diet, focused on whole unprocessed foods including leafy greens, fresh fruits and vegetables, proteins from fish and nuts and decreased intake of concentrated sweets, starches/carbs and red meats.</li> <li>• Many “probiotics” contain only 1-2 out of tens of thousands of bacterial species that live in our gut.</li> </ul>
 <p>VITAMIN D</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low vitamin D status is a risk factor for developing MS, and MS patients who have low vitamin D may develop more brain lesions.</li> <li>• The ideal dose of vitamin D, and the ideal blood level of vitamin D to target, are unknown. People respond differently to the same dose of supplementation, and most patients require more than the FDA’s RDA to increase blood levels. Talk to your doctor about checking levels to ensure they are within the normal range, and about the best dose for you.</li> </ul>
 <p>SMOKING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoking tobacco increases the risk of MS, and MS patients who smoke may have a worse clinical course.</li> <li>• Discuss strategies for smoking cessation (e.g. counseling, medications) with your doctor.</li> <li>• The safety and benefits of vaping over standard smoking are unknown.</li> </ul>
 <p>COMPREHENSIVE CARE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While managing your MS can take a central role in your healthcare, it is important not to neglect your general health.</li> <li>• Make sure your MS provider is aware of other medical problems, such as high blood pressure or diabetes.</li> <li>• It is important that you see your primary care provider regularly and that you are up to date on your vaccines, cancer screening, bone health, and other age-appropriate care.</li> </ul>
 <p>PLANNING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipating challenging situations and planning for them is important for managing your MS. Strategies may address:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Times that are particularly fatiguing (e.g. work with your school to develop a modified examination schedule).</li> <li>○ Seasonal changes (e.g. hotter weather = worsening MS symptoms)</li> <li>○ Pregnancy (work with our women’s health experts!)</li> <li>○ Risk of Falls (e.g. physical therapy consultations, adaptive equipment, remove area rugs, replace dim lighting)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p>OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At every visit, talk to your doctor about “Breaking the Cycle”: tease apart sleep, mood, fatigue, pain, and work issues that can work like dominoes to make a patient feel worse</li> <li>• “Use it or Lose it”: whether we have MS or not, skills need to be reinforced or they will dwindle. This includes periodically reassessing strength, walking, balance, mood, and thinking and developing strategies to maintain them,</li> <li>• “Keep MS small”: our goal is to help our patients treat their MS, and go on to live life</li> </ul>

*\*This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace the advice of your doctor or health care provider. We encourage you to discuss with any questions or concerns you may have.*