

Multiple Sclerosis and Supported Independent Living



Diagnosis and support coordination for those living with multiple sclerosis

What is multiple sclerosis?

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is an **auto-immune disease** that gets progressively worse over time, attacking the myelin – the protective layer that covers your nerves. This process is called demyelination. Demyelination causes inflammation and scarring (sclerosis) on your nerves, which stops them from properly transporting the brain's signals around the body. This nerve damage can happen anywhere in the body, which is why MS looks and feels different for each individual.

There are **different types of MS**:

Relapsing-remitting MS — symptoms appear and worsen over a short period before getting better or going away (remitting), and then returning (relapsing). Over time, the relapses can get longer, or worse — see secondary progressive MS. Relapsing-remitting MS is the most common type.

Primary progressive MS — symptoms gradually get worse, without any periods of remission.

Secondary progressive MS — diagnosed when relapsing-remitting gets worse over time. There may be periods of remission, but symptoms do not completely go away. For some people this can happen in months, for others it takes decades.

MS is chronic (ongoing), and has a big impact on a person's life and health, but it is not terminal (deadly). MS is common, with more than 25,000 people in Australia **living with the disease**.

Though the cause of MS is unknown, there are **some risk factors**. You are more likely to develop MS if you are a woman, have close family members with MS, have had previous infections similar to the virus, glandular fever (Epstein-Barr virus), smoke, or live further away from the equator.

Signs and diagnosis

MS presents differently for everyone, depending where and how much your nerves have been affected. Symptoms can be broad, unpredictable, and hard to notice. They might not last long before disappearing and coming back.

Symptoms can affect:

- muscle control and motor function — you might have spasms, weakness, poor coordination or poor balance
- fatigue levels — feeling constantly exhausted, despite getting good sleep and nutrition
- vision — changes to your eyesight like blurred vision, double vision or losing sight
- bladder and bowel function — changes in how often and easily you go to the toilet
- sense of touch — pins and needles, numbness, sensitivity to touch or unexplained pains
- mood — depression and anxiety are common symptoms of MS.

If you have concerns, the first step is to contact a **doctor**. They might refer you to a neurologist who is an expert in diagnosing MS, and suggest preliminary research into Australian home care services.

Diagnosing MS can take time due to other health conditions resulting in similar symptoms. Doctors will run tests to rule out other causes and be able to confirm the nerve damage that indicates MS. These tests might include taking blood, brain scans, and lumbar punctures (taking fluid from the spine to test it for signs of disease).

Most people are diagnosed with MS between the ages of 20 and 40 and can receive a range of in home care assistance.

Treatment, services and support

At Claro, we provide **disability and allied health services** that can be tailored to your needs to support in home care and independence. Whether it is assistance with the groceries, transport, or finding accommodation that is suitable for you, we will ensure you receive the right supports.

We partner with **Plena Healthcare** to provide allied health services, which are crucial to your long-term care for multiple sclerosis. As an NDIS registered provider, we can connect you with nursing supports, occupational and physiotherapy, speech pathology, dietetics, and podiatry services.

You might also want assistance managing your home care packages and additional assistance. If you have funding for **Support Coordination** in your NDIS plan, our experienced and knowledgeable **Support Coordinators** can connect you to the services you need.

Fill out our **enquiry form** and we will contact you to talk about the right support options.

How Claro can support you

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Resources

- **Multiple sclerosis, Health Direct**
- **Multiple sclerosis, Mayo Clinic**
- **Multiple sclerosis, Better Health Channel Victoria**
- **MS common symptoms and treatment, Better Health Channel Victoria**
- **Changes in Multiple Sclerosis Disease Course, National MS Society**
- **Depression in MS, National MS Society**
- **MS Research Australia**
- **MS Australia**
- **MS Connect**
- **Understanding the NDIS**



Contact details

Claro Aged Care and Disability Services

Find us at claro.com.au
Call us on 1300 303 770