

Tell me about MS (for children)

***Your dad or your mum has MS, but...
what does it mean?***



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What is Multiple Sclerosis (MS)*?

Imagine that the body is like a lamp you have at home. The lamp works thanks to the wire that carries electricity to the bulb. This wire should be in good state so the lamp may work, shouldn't it? This way, when you switch it on, the lamp, lights.

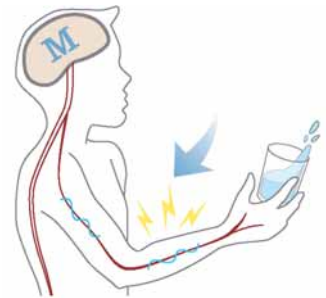
The human body works like a lamp. In people, the wires of the lamp are the nervous fibers going from the brain to each part of our body telling them what to do, for example, to "walk" or to "speak." Let's say your brain wants you to lift the arm, it sends the order through a wire of nervous fibers (spinal cord) until it reaches the arm, and then the arm rises.



When somebody has Multiple Sclerosis, and wants to lift the leg to take a step, the message doesn't arrive properly and it is difficult for them to move their leg. Sometimes the same thing happens when he/she wants to take a glass, to speak or to see...



This happens because the "wires" (nervous fibers) are covered in a substance called myelin (it is like the plastic that covers the wires) and in MS it is worn out. For that reason, all the symptoms that you see in dad or mum are due to lack of myelin. It is as if the plastic covering the wire was broken, the electricity (message) doesn't travel down the wire properly so the bulb doesn't always light.



People with Multiple Sclerosis...

- Sometimes find it difficult to do things such as speaking, walking, sewing...
- Can be much more tired than any boy or girl after playing without doing anything.
- Have you ever had pins and needles in your leg? That is what they may feel, but for a long time.
- Can feel their legs and arms very heavy. It's as if they were carrying a backpack like yours when you go to school.
- Sometimes see everything blurry, as when you wear someone else's glasses.

Someone with MS has good days and bad days. There are some days when walking is not so difficult, but there are other days when they find it very difficult and they also get very tired.

* Multiple Sclerosis is also known as "MS"



Remember that...

- MS is not contagious like a "flu or a cold."
 - You will probably not have MS when you grow up.
 - Dad/mum won't die of MS, he/she will only have to make more effort to do the things that you do easily.
 - MS is nobody's fault. Nobody knows why dad/mum has MS.
 - There is a lot of research and there are news about this every day. Treatments followed by dad/mum, will make them feel better. They might need to stay at hospital sometimes.
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- MS is different in each person.
 - It is possible that your mum/dad may need your help to do some things.
 - MS comes and goes; sometimes it lasts for a long time and sometimes a little. Nobody knows what MS will do, for that reason some plans may have to be changed; that means being "flexible".

What happens if...?

When mum or dad has a bad day, you may get angry because you cannot do what you want together, or may feel sad because you don't like to see him/her like that or you may fear for your mum or dad. This happens to us all when somebody we love has a bad day.

- If you are sad, crying will sometimes make us feel better.
- If you get angry, think that this is something normal. Instead of getting angry with others, try to let off steam in some other way.
- If you sometimes believe that MS is more important than you, remember that your parents will always think you are more important.
- If you sometimes feel uncomfortable because your mum/dad needs a walking cane or something else to help her/him to walk, remember that this will make mum/dad feel better.

It is not good for anybody to keep feelings inside. Do not be afraid to ask questions or to say something that you worry about. This is important.

When you get angry, feel sad, are afraid or have doubts, tell your parents or someone you feel good with, and you will feel better.



• Although your dad or your mum have MS, they can still be sensational parents •