



## National MS Society Information Sourcebook

[www.nationalmssociety.org/sourcebook](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/sourcebook)

### Health Professionals Involved in MS Care

People living with MS have a variety of needs and concerns, including:

- management of neurological symptoms of the disease, such as weakness, tremor, loss of vision, cognitive changes, sexual problems, and others
- related emotional and psychological issues
- rehabilitation therapy and exercise
- employment issues such as disclosure, job accommodations, and disability insurance
- education about the disease process for people with MS and their families
- counseling and instruction on self help
- reproductive issues
- home care issues and needs
- life planning and long-term-care options

While some people with MS have access to comprehensive care teams made up of health professionals from a variety of disciplines who address the whole spectrum of care, others utilize individual practitioners in their community. The health professions who are likely to be involved in a person's care at some point over the course of the disease include:

- **Neurologist** – a physician who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of conditions related to the nervous system.
- **Neuropsychologist** – a psychologist with specialized training in the evaluation of cognitive functions. Neuropsychologists use a battery of standardized tests to assess specific cognitive functions and identify areas of cognitive impairment. They also provide remediation for individuals with MS-related cognitive impairment.
- **Nurse** – the nurse, a key member of the comprehensive patient care team, often acts in a management role. The nurse provides a link for physicians and other health care professionals with persons with MS, their families and the community.
- **Occupational therapist** – occupational therapists assess functioning in activities of everyday living, including dressing, bathing, grooming, meal preparation, writing and driving which are essential for daily living.

- **Orthotist** – a person skilled in making mechanical appliances (orthotics) such as leg braces or splints that help to support limb function.
- **Physiatrist** – physicians who specialize in the rehabilitation of physical impairments.
- **Physical therapist** – physical therapists are trained to evaluate and improve movement and function of the body, with particular attention to physical mobility, strength, balance, posture, fatigue and pain.
- **Speech/language pathologist** – speech/language pathologists specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of speech and swallowing disorders. A person with MS may be referred to a speech/language pathologist with help with either or both of these disorders. Because of their expertise with speech and language difficulties, they may also provide cognitive remediation for individuals with cognitive impairment.

People with MS need to keep in mind that not all of their medical problems are necessarily related to MS. Like the general population, they are subject to medical problems that need to be addressed by their family physician. In addition, preventive health measures, such as annual examinations and age-appropriate screening tests, are just as important for people with MS as they are for everyone else.

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**See also...**

**Sourcebook**

- Clinics/Comprehensive Care Centers
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Rehabilitation

**Society Web Resources**

- Healthy Living with MS  
[www.nationalmssociety.org/Healthy](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/Healthy)
- Treatments  
[www.nationalmssociety.org/Treatments](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/Treatments)
- Spotlight: Rehabilitation in MS  
[www.nationalmssociety.org/Rehab](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/Rehab)

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is proud to be a source of information about multiple sclerosis. Our comments are based on professional advice, published experience, and expert opinion, but do not represent individual therapeutic recommendations or prescription. For specific information and advice, consult your personal physician.

To contact your chapter, call **1-800-FIGHT-MS** (1-800-344-4867) or visit the National MS Society web site: [www.nationalmssociety.org](http://www.nationalmssociety.org).