MS Coordination Problems

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Coping With MS Coordination Problems

Most MS sufferers experience problems with coordination, because this condition affects your balance and ability to walk in several ways.

Various parts of your body work together to help you coordinate your movements. Simply put, the balance system involves:

- Input – when the brain receives information
- Processing – the brain processes the balance information
- Output – when the brain sends information out to move the limbs

MS can affect any of these components, causing difficulty with coordination. Let’s look at how.

Input

The information received by the brain may be altered because of vision problems (i.e. blurred or double vision). MS can also affect the pathways between the inner ear and the brain, which provide information about the angle and the position of the head.

MS is also linked with so-called sensory changes (i.e. numbness and tingling), and these changes may not tell your brain accurately what to in order to maintain balance and body position.

Finally, fatigue is a common symptom associated with MS, and it can also influence your balance and coordination.

Processing

The way your brain process information is complex, and MS damages various parts of the brain. As a result, symptoms like vertigo or nausea can occur, leading to balance and coordination problems.

Output

Difficulties with coordination and tremor may be caused by muscle weakness and stiffness. These issues happen because the muscles are unable to respond properly to the signals sent by the brain. A weak or stiff muscle will move slower, and not always in the desired position, leading to lack of coordination.

Managing Coordination Problems

1. See your doctor regularly to adjust your MS medication to better manage the symptoms. If necessary, a doctor may have to rule out other conditions that can cause coordination problems such as inner ear infections and positional vertigo (where the spinning sensations happen when you move your head). Some side effects of medication also include problems with balance and fatigue.
2. Try to stay as active as you can. Even when you have bad days, try to do some stretching exercises, as they help relieve muscle stiffness and spasticity. Ask a physiotherapist for an individualized plan to suit your condition and fitness levels.
3. Use assistive devices, as they can help improve your balance and help you better manage muscle weakness. Various braces, canes and walkers are available, and the physiotherapist can help you choose the right device and show you how to use it properly.
4. Avoid stress and fatigue, as both will aggravate your problems with coordination. Aim to sleep at least eight hours every night, and take a short nap during the day, as needed. Manage stress with meditation, deep breathing, yoga or tai chi.
5. Eat healthy, nutrient rich foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, whole grains, lean meats and fish. The health of your muscles, nerves, brain and the entire body depends on the nutrients from your diet.

Resources

National MS Society - Walking Difficulties

MS Society - Causes for Balance and Dizziness