When MS and Other Health Problems Co-Exist

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Living with MS and Other Health Problems

Many people who live with MS must also deal with other health problems, which can call for a very personalized approach. You may need more medication and a modified routine or if the condition is serious enough, a new treatment plan altogether.

New symptoms can mean new challenges, but living with multiple conditions is much easier with the right tools. Learn how to assess new symptoms, live more comfortably with multiple conditions and communication tactics to take control of your health.

How to Manage New Symptoms

Certain chronic illnesses like diabetes, arthritis and fibromyalgia can be stressful but probably won't interfere with your main course of MS treatment. In fact, many things you already do for your well-being – eating properly, exercising appropriately and modifying your household for easier movement – will also help with your new symptoms. On the other hand, a life-threatening disease like cancer must take priority over your MS treatment, at least in the short term.

Any persistent and worsening symptoms should be investigated thoroughly, even if you're tempted to attribute them to your MS. Report new discomforts to your neurologist, who will be able to determine whether or not they are neurological (and who to see if they're not).

Getting the Right Medical Care

While your primary care physician and your neurologist will continue to play major roles in your treatment, you may need to add another specialist to the roster. It can feel overwhelming to have so many medical professionals in your life, but there are several ways to keep things organized and the lines of communication open:

- **Use one pharmacy for all your medications.** Getting to know your pharmacological team will help you feel comfortable, but it's also a good preventative measure. Most pharmacists use prescription software that automatically identifies possible drug interactions, so if one location handles all your medications, there will never be any questionable pairings.
- **Compile a list of medications.** Include everything each doctor has prescribed, but also any complementary therapy and everyday over-the-counter medication that you're using. Make sure each doctor has a copy of the list, and be sure to update it as needed.
- **Touch base with each doctor regularly.** Whether you have an appointment with all of your doctors or just one on any given week, relay the important details of the visit to the rest of your team. If phone calls are too difficult to arrange, ask if you can use their email addresses to stay connected.
- **Look for a helping hand.** MS treatment can be difficult to handle on its own, and when there's another condition involved, it's easy to get overwhelmed. You can ask friends or family to help you keep

appointments and prescriptions straight or contact your local or international MS Society for outside help.

Multiple medical conditions will call for more attention, and that can drain your energy and strain your relationships. The better you can organize your treatment, the easier it will be to continue in your routine: keep a journal to track your pain and progress, keep notes on how your medications are working and take help when it is offered. Above all, be sure to take time to regenerate your body and mind with exercise and relaxation, which will help you overcome the stress that comes with chronic illness.