# 6 Symptoms of MS That Are Typically Unheard Of

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## Unusual Symptoms of MS

Although multiple sclerosis (MS) affects people in different ways, most people are aware of the common symptoms. But, what are the unusual symptoms of MS?

### Common Symptoms

According to the National Health Service (NHS) some of the most common symptoms are:

- Fatigue
- Vision problems
- Numbness and tingling
- Muscle spasm, stiffness and weakness
- Mobility problems
- Pain
- Problems with thinking, learning and planning
- Depression and anxiety
- Sexual problems
- Bladder problems
- Bowel problems
- Speech and swallowing difficulties

This list is depressing in its familiarity to me and I have certainly experienced most of these at some point or other.

What about more rare or unusual symptoms though? Are there symptoms that occur in so few of us that professionals are unaware of them and do not associate them with MS? What implication does this have for us suffering in silence and should we assume that every strange symptom must be associated with MS?

### 6 Rare or Unusual Symptoms

Damage to the central nervous system is what causes the common symptoms of MS, but as it is a wide range of functions that affect many different people, it can show up in some strange and varied ways:

#### 1. The MS Hug

The name suggests a warm and cozy feeling, but the reality is vastly different. Sometimes called banding, this can feel like being squeezed firmly about the chest. It can occur anywhere between your waist and neck, or just to one side. It can also feel like pain or breathlessness and happens when damage to the brain blocks or confuses message to the nerves. I've never experienced this but many people with MS I talk to get this often.

**2. Pseudobulbar Affect (PBA)**

This is out of control, whether it be laughing or sobbing. Also called emotional incontinence, PBA causes random outbursts of tears or laughter that have nothing to do with how you feel. It's caused by nerve damage to the part of the brain that controls emotional responses and causes them to get all mixed up. I've experienced this mildly. Occasionally I will find something funny and will laugh disproportionally, prompting amused glances from onlookers! Can I put this down to PBA though, or is it genuine laughter? I've also experienced negative emotions and tears but can usually explain these feelings as a reaction to my circumstances.

**3. Itching**

This is more than normal itching, but more like an itch that cannot be scratched. I get this in my left hand and arm from time to time and it drives me insane. Also called dysesthetic itching, it is a nerve-related sensation and I find the more I try and itch it, the more it travels up my arm and gets worse. I have to try and sit on my hand and ignore it, usually it goes away quite quickly on its own, but epilepsy medication, such as gabapentin can help.

**4. Optical Illusions**

As well as optic neuritis, which is fairly common in MS, another optical trick is known as the Pulfrich phenomenon. This is a 3D illusion caused by a conflict in your vision. Instead of seeing an object headed towards you, you might see its path as an elliptical orbit. An oncoming car might appear to swerve towards you, or a ball might appear to be in a different place than you expect. This has serious implications for driving, but a special filter in front of one eye can help balance your vision.

**5. Migraines**

People with MS are twice as likely to get migraines than other people and they can last several days and cause sickness and sensitivity to light and sound. I've been getting migraines in the last few years and never suffered in my childhood or youth. My neurologist told me there was no link to MS, illustrating the issue that health professionals are not always up to date with less common symptoms.

**6. Hearing Problems**

Although permanent deafness in MS is rare, swelling and scar tissue near your auditory nerve can cause hearing problems, as signals to the brain are confused. I have this issue from time to time in my left ear and an ear exam could find nothing wrong.

**Talk to Your Health Care Team**

Although some of the symptoms above will baffle your neurologist and healthcare professionals might deny they are related to MS, it is important to report them to your MS team.

It may be that you are having a relapse and according to the MS Trust, relapses can be a sign that your MS is becoming more active and you need further treatment.

It's also important to rule out other possible explanations for new symptoms. I was terrified that my migraines were caused by a tumor. Just because you have MS, it does not make you immune to other nasty diseases and early detection is vital to improve outcomes.

I would also talk to other people with MS too, as it is amazing how much advice and support is out there on social media and other online platforms.