

# Understanding Multiple Sclerosis

## A Quick Guide



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## ABOUT MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS (MS)

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, unpredictable condition of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information between the brain and spinal cord. The cause of MS is unknown. It is an individual condition, and MS symptoms vary greatly from person to person. There is no cure for MS, but early diagnosis and treatment are crucial for improving long-term health and well-being and reducing the frequency of relapses. Treatment at any stage of the condition offers benefits, and research is ongoing.

### GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

2.9 

MS prevalence has increased worldwide, with **2.9 million** cases reported in 2023.<sup>21</sup>

### Epidemiology & Prevalence of MS

32  YEARS

MS can affect individuals of any age, but **the average diagnosis age globally is 32 years.** Globally, **MS affects 0.13 to 0.6 children and teenagers per 100,000 per year.**<sup>4,21</sup>

MS prevalence is rising in the Middle East, with the UAE transitioning to a moderately-high risk zone.<sup>4</sup>

19 / 100K

The number of people with MS in the UAE is estimated to be approximately 19 out of every 100,000 people, according to studies from 2011 to 2016.<sup>2,22</sup>

64 / 100K

Abu Dhabi's prevalence is 64 per 100,000.<sup>22</sup>

7 / 100K

Dubai, 7 out of 100,000 Emiratis are newly diagnosed with MS each year.<sup>2</sup>



More young people in the UAE are diagnosed with MS compared to other regions.<sup>23</sup>

26 YEARS

MS commonly begins in **young adults**, with an average age of onset of around 26 in the UAE.<sup>3</sup>



**75% of Emiratis with MS** are diagnosed when they are younger than **30 years of age**.<sup>3</sup>

7 / 100K

Approximately **7 out of 100,000 teenagers** between the ages 15-19 years are diagnosed with MS each year, in Abu Dhabi.<sup>23</sup>



The **prevalence** of MS may be **underestimated** among expats in the UAE.<sup>22</sup>



Lack of comprehensive MS data **impact accurate prevalence** and burden of MS.<sup>24</sup>



People with MS might choose to **return to their home countries for medical treatment** due to reasons such as their disability accessibility challenges, and the **high cost of treatment**.<sup>22</sup>



Females are **twice as likely** to have MS. 67% of females vs 33% of males in the UAE.<sup>2</sup>

67%

F

33%

M

## TYPES OF MS

MS may present as relapsing-remitting or progressive forms.

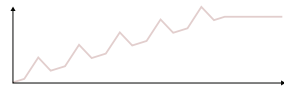
### CLINICALLY ISOLATED SYNDROME (CIS)

Is an initial episode of MS-like symptoms lasting at least 24 hours. It could indicate a risk of future MS development. It's a precursor, not a definitive diagnosis.<sup>5</sup>



### RELAPSING-REMITTING MS

Includes periods of worsening symptoms followed by partial or complete recovery. The most common form of MS.<sup>6</sup>



### SECONDARY PROGRESSIVE MS (SPMS)

Follows RRMS. Characterized by a gradual worsening of symptoms over time, with fewer or no relapses.<sup>6</sup>



### PRIMARY PROGRESSIVE MS (PPMS)

Is marked by a steady progression of symptoms from onset, without distinct relapse and remission phases.<sup>6</sup>



## SYMPTOMS OF MS



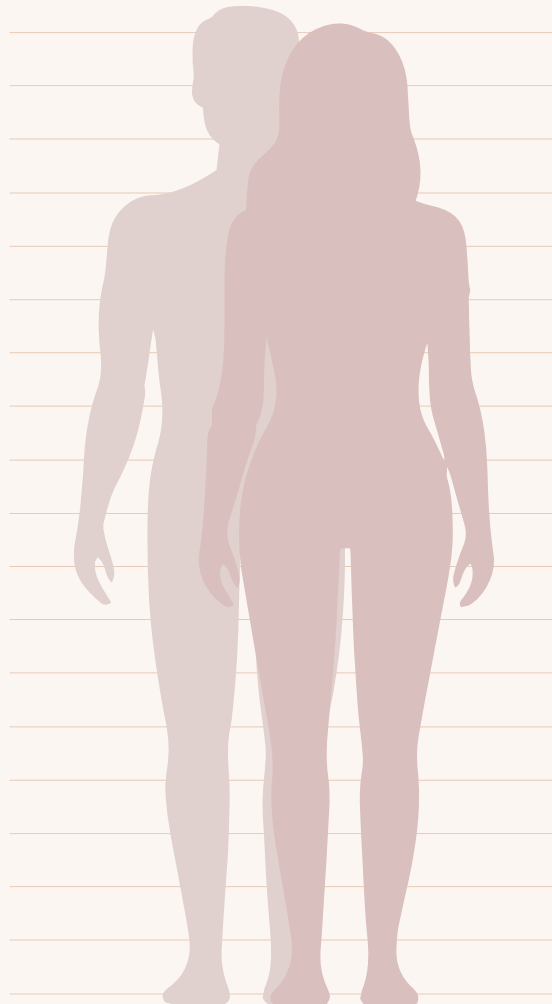
MS symptoms can include **movement and coordination issues, visual disturbances and fatigue.**<sup>7</sup>



**Increased body temperature worsens symptoms** in 80% of cases.<sup>11</sup>



**Visual problems** occur in 80% of cases.<sup>9</sup>



**Bladder-related symptoms** occur in 80% of cases.<sup>10</sup>



**Movement and coordination issues** are experienced by up to 84% of PwMS. This can lead to **difficulty walking, falls, tiredness, muscle spasms** and even a greater chance of needing a wheelchair.<sup>8</sup>

## Impact on Daily Life



**Pain and mobility** issues can affect everyday tasks like walking, working, and household chores.<sup>7</sup>



MS can lead to **depression and anxiety**, emphasizing the need for mental health support.<sup>15</sup>



**Fatigue**, experienced by about 80% of people with MS, necessitates energy conservation and rest.<sup>14</sup>



**Muscle weakness, balance problems, and gait disorders** can impact mobility, requiring adaptive aids and physical therapy.<sup>7</sup>



**Headaches, extremity pain, and muscle spasms**<sup>13</sup> are common MS symptoms that require effective pain management strategies.<sup>12</sup>



MS-related symptoms could **affect work engagement**, requiring workplace flexibility and support.<sup>15</sup> **People with MS are less likely to be employed, even if their disability is mild.**<sup>1</sup>

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## CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS

The exact cause of MS is still unknown, however a mix of factors may increase the risk of triggering MS.

### GENETICS

Having a family member with MS increases risk, but genes aren't the sole cause. Lifestyle and environment play a role.<sup>16</sup>



### LIFESTYLE AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Low vitamin D levels, smoking, and obesity are linked to higher MS risk.<sup>17,18,20</sup>



### THE EPSTEIN-BARR VIRUS

Research suggests a link between the Epstein-Barr virus and MS.<sup>19</sup> However, MS is not contagious.<sup>18</sup>



