

# COMMUNICATING YOUR PRIORITIES TO YOUR NEUROLOGIST AND CARE TEAM

## UNLOCK AND SHARE WHAT MATTERS TO YOU IN AN MS TREATMENT

As a person living with multiple sclerosis (MS), it's important for you to play an active role in your care decisions through ongoing discussions with your neurologist and care team. Sharing the symptoms, flare-ups and side effects you may experience is a way to self-advocate and gain a sense of control over your MS.

When those conversations turn to treatment options, there are several factors to consider. Your care team is likely to discuss **effectiveness, side effects, dosing schedule** and **how the medication is taken**. Consider how these align with your needs, wishes and priorities.

A good place to start is defining each of those. Read through each section below and put a number in the circle to rank its importance for you (with 1 being the most important and 4 being the least important).



### **EFFECTIVENESS**

Effectiveness is determined by the medication's effect on your body, meaning how well it works. When discussing effectiveness of MS treatment, your neurologist may refer to its ability to reduce the number of relapses, reduce the number and volume of active brain lesions on MRI scans or slow down the progression of physical disability.



### **DOSING SCHEDULE**

The dosing schedule of a medication refers to when and how often you take it. Different medications are taken at different frequencies – including once or twice daily, or once a month. Your lifestyle may play a role in determining a dosing schedule that works best for you.



### **SIDE EFFECTS AND RISKS**

All medications can cause side effects, and some may have long-term risks. You may think that a stronger medication comes with more side effects, but this is not always the case. Side effects and long-term risks should be part of your discussion with your care team.



### **HOW THE MEDICATION IS TAKEN**

Most MS treatments are taken either by injection, infusion or pill – and you may have a preference. Your comfort level with these can be part of your conversation, as well.

As you can see, deciding on a treatment that is right for you involves balancing the importance of convenience, your lifestyle preferences, your personal risk tolerance and your treatment goals.

Let's look further to help you, as well as your neurologist and care team better understand what motivates your treatment choice.

# COMMUNICATING YOUR PRIORITIES TO YOUR NEUROLOGIST AND CARE TEAM

## WHAT MOTIVATES YOUR DECISIONS?

Let's first look at what motivates your decisions.

Put an **X** beside the statement that better reflects you.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> I am a cautious person.  | <input type="radio"/> I am a trendsetter.   |
| <input type="radio"/> I look at all aspects when it comes to making a decision.        | <input type="radio"/> I focus on a specific goal when making a decision.                                |
| <input type="radio"/> I resist change.   | <input type="radio"/> I am open to change.  |
| <input type="radio"/> When I make a decision, I tend to stick with it for a long time. | <input type="radio"/> I'm likely to change my mind if a decision I made doesn't seem to be working out. |

Now let's look at where your priorities lie when it comes to risk and lifestyle preferences.

Put an **X** beside the statement that better reflects you.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> I prefer a treatment taken in the presence of a medical professional.                       | <input type="radio"/> I prefer a treatment that can fit easily around my schedule and can be taken anywhere.              |
| <input type="radio"/> I prefer a frequent treatment, as a regular routine will help me remember to take it.       | <input type="radio"/> I prefer a treatment that is less frequent, so that it interferes less with my daily activities.    |
| <input type="radio"/> I worry about side effects that may cause me to miss important life events, work or school. | <input type="radio"/> I worry about unexpected flare-ups that may cause me to miss important life events, work or school. |

Now that you've thought about these statements, it's time to craft a personal goal that can help guide your treatment decision. Remember that this is your goal today – it's natural for a treatment goal to change over time, as your life and priorities change. Look at your answers and think about what matters most to you. Here is an example to get you started:

*"My personal goal in an MS treatment is to be able to continue to look after my kids without the interruption of flare-ups."*

### MY PERSONAL GOAL IN AN MS TREATMENT IS:



## YOU FINISHED THE QUIZ, IT IS TIME FOR A VISIT!

With this information in mind, you should be better prepared to have a discussion with your neurologist and care team. Along with everything you've uncovered above, here are a few more questions you can ask:

- **Are there any treatment options available that we haven't discussed?**
- **What is my long-term outlook if I stay on my current treatment?**
- **Does my treatment best suit my personal treatment goal?**

Can you think of any other questions you'd like to discuss?

With a chronic and unpredictable disease like MS, an in-person appointment may be preferable to virtual care. Make sure that you can share and agree on short-term and long-term goals, and your own feelings about lifestyle preferences and risk.

**For more information and resources for people living with MS, visit [MyRules.ca](https://www.myrules.ca)**