

Contact Us Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430

Sensory Symptoms

Overview

Sensory symptoms include numbness, tingling, burning, itching, and increased sensitivity to touch. Twenty to fifty percent of patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) will experience sensory symptoms, often early in the course of MS. This educational brochure will provide information about common sensory symptoms and how to manage them.

Numbness

Numbness occurs because damaged nerves do not transmit information correctly to the brain. This causes sensations from the body to be either reduced or totally eliminated. Numbness usually goes away by itself and is just an annoyance. However, some types of numbness are more severe. If the face is numb, one must be careful not to bite the lips or tongue while chewing. Also, numbness of the limbs can make it difficult for the brain to sense the position of a limb. This can lead to trouble with balance or coordination. Medications such as gabapentin (Neurontin), pregabalin (Lyrica), amitriptyline (Elavil), venlafaxine (Effexor), and duloxetine (Cymbalta) may help MS patients manage numbness that does not improve with time.

Tingling/Burning

Tingling or burning sensations may also be caused by damage to nerve cells. In severe cases, these symptoms sometimes cause uncontrollable leg movements. This condition is known as Restless Leg Syndrome, or RLS. Medications such as gabapentin (Neurontin), pramipexole (Mirapex), and ropinirole (Requip) may help manage RLS. Also, lifestyle changes improve RLS. These changes include avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine (which can worsen RLS), practicing good sleep habits, and stretching, warming, or massaging the affected leg. For more information about managing RLS, please contact your Patient Care Coordinator.

Weakness

Weakness has two main causes. For some patients, weakness is brought on by a different MS symptom, like fatigue or spasticity. For other patients, weakness is caused by actual damage to nerve cells, which means that muscle strength is still present, but signals from the brain are not getting through. Treating fatigue or spasticity may help reduce weakness that is due to these causes. Also, a class of medicines called aminopyridines may benefit patients who experience weakness due to actual nerve damage. Ask your Patient Care Coordinator for more information about dealing with weakness caused by MS.

Management

- Speak with your doctor about medications for managing sensory symptoms.
- Get gentle massages focusing on the areas causing the most discomfort.
- Consider using hot or cold compresses to soothe affected areas.
- Speak with a physical therapist about the benefits of exercise.
- Contact Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy or your doctor for more tips on managing sensory symptoms.

For questions or concerns regarding any of the above statements or recommendations, please feel free to contact Diplomat Specialty Pharmacy Toll Free at 1.866.208.3430.