

# Key facts and figures about multiple sclerosis



**Multiple Sclerosis (MS)** is a chronic disease that attacks the central nervous system (the brain, spinal cord and optic nerves). The progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS cannot be predicted. MS is a lifelong disease for which a cure is yet to be found; however, doctors and scientists are making discoveries about the treatment and management of MS every day.

## General facts about MS

**25,600+**

There are over **25,600** people living with MS in Australia

**Every 5 minutes**, someone, somewhere in the world is diagnosed with MS.



Diagnosis of MS is mostly between the ages of **20 and 40 years**.



**Three quarters** of all people with MS are women.



In young adults MS is the **most common acquired disease** of the central nervous system.



**2.8 million** people are living with MS worldwide.

### Forms of MS at diagnosis

**12%**  
Progressive form of MS (PPMS)



**3%** unknown MS disease type  
**85%** Relapsing remitting MS (RRMS)

Many people diagnosed with RRMS will eventually develop secondary progressive MS (SPMS).

## Common symptoms of MS

The symptoms of MS can be both visible and invisible to others, are unpredictable and vary from person to person and from time to time in the same person.

They include:

changes in memory, concentration or reasoning

visual disturbance, such as blurred or double vision

slurring or slowing of speech

dizziness and vertigo

extreme tiredness (unusual fatigue)

emotional and mood changes

altered sensation, such as tingling, numbness or pins and needles

pain

altered muscle tone, such as muscle weakness, tremor, stiffness or spasms

sexual changes

bladder and bowel changes

difficulties with walking, balance or coordination

sensitivity to heat and/or cold

# The economic and personal cost of MS

**\$1,750,000,000**

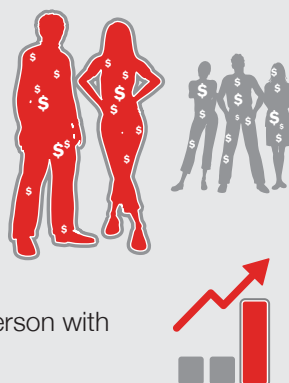
MS is estimated to have cost the **Australian community \$1.75 billion** in 2017.

In 2017, the average cost of MS\* **per person** was **\$68,382**.

Similar to that of someone with Parkinson's disease or the first year after a stroke...

...**triple** that of a person with type 2 diabetes.

\* Comprising both individual and societal costs.



Of all the various categories that comprise the total cost of MS, **lost wages** now account for only **32% of the economic burden** of MS compared to almost **50% in 2010**.

On average, in 2017, the **quality of life** of people with MS in Australia is **31% less** than that of the overall Australian population.



Quality of life for people with MS who are living with **severe disability is 41% lower** compared to people with MS with no disability.



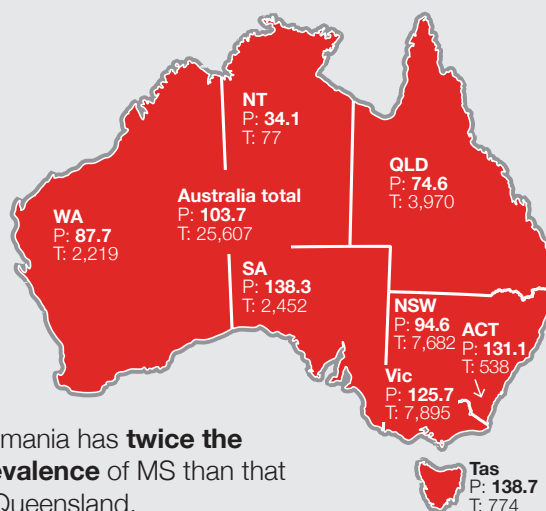
This substantially reduced quality of life is primarily driven by the impact of MS on **pain, independent living, mental health** and **relationships**.

# The prevalence of MS



The prevalence of MS in Australia in **2017 was 103.7** people with MS per 100,000, compared to **95.5 in 2010**. This increase reflects global trends and likely reflects the **increased survival** of people with MS.

The **further** away from the equator people live - the **higher the prevalence** of MS.



Tasmania has **twice the prevalence** of MS than that of Queensland.

Prevalence (P) of MS per 100,000 people, and total number (T) of people with MS.

**64%** of people with MS are using a disease modifying therapy\*, **an increase of 40%** since 2010.



\* A drug designed to reduce the number and severity of relapses and slow or halt the progression of their MS.

Global experts believe that addressing the impact of **smoking, Vitamin D deficiency, obesity** and **glandular fever** could **prevent 60%** of MS cases.



If there was a vaccine against the Epstein Barr Virus\* **90% of MS cases might be prevented**.

\* the virus that causes glandular fever.



## References

1. The Health Economic Impact of Multiple Sclerosis in Australia 2017 report, commissioned by MS Research Australia and prepared by the Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania, August 2018
2. Environmental modifiable risk factors for multiple sclerosis: Report from the 2016ECTRIMS focused workshop, Amato M. et al, Multiple Sclerosis Journal, Vol 24, Issue 5, 2018
3. Atlas of MS 2020, Multiple Sclerosis International Federation, September 2020, [www.atlasofms.org](http://www.atlasofms.org)

For information about Multiple Sclerosis and MS Australia:  
**[www.msaustralia.org.au](http://www.msaustralia.org.au)**