

Time matters in multiple sclerosis: diagnose early to maximise brain health

A guide for general practitioners and primary care providers

Multiple sclerosis is now a highly treatable disease. A [short guide](#) for general practitioners (GPs) and primary care providers (PCPs) provides advice to help diagnose and manage patients with multiple sclerosis. Early diagnosis is crucial to long term brain health. However, symptoms of multiple sclerosis are varied and it is therefore difficult to diagnose. There is also a perception that little can be done to treat multiple sclerosis. This is not the case.

This [concise guide](#) provides advice for GPs and PCPs, including how to:

1. Identify symptoms that may indicate multiple sclerosis in a timely manner
2. Refer patients to a specialist neurologist and MS clinic
3. Follow up with patients to provide ongoing care and support their brain healthy lifestyle.

The guide is based on an evidence-based international consensus report, [Brain Health: time matters in multiple sclerosis](#), which describes a strategy to maximise lifelong brain health and includes recommendations on how to achieve this goal. Key points of relevance to GPs and PCPs are highlighted in the short guide.

The diagnosis, treatment and management of multiple sclerosis is changing rapidly. There are more than 12 medications available on the PBS in Australia, with more in the pipeline.

By minimising delays in diagnosis and referral to a specialist, you can help to maximize brain health and improve the lives of people with MS.

It is hoped that GPs and PCPs will find this guide useful and will share the information widely.

To find out more and to read the full [Brain Health: time matters in multiple sclerosis](#) report and to check out other useful resources, please visit www.msbrainhealth.org

KEY FACTS:

Multiple sclerosis

- Is a neurological condition affecting the central nervous system (brain, optic nerve and spinal cord) that affects more than 25,600 Australians
- Is the most common chronic neurological condition diagnosed in young adults
- Is most commonly diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40
- Affects mainly women, with three in every four diagnoses
- Varies significantly from person to person: for some people, it is a disease that comes and goes in severity with periods of unpredictable relapse and remission, while for others it means a progressive decline over time
- Includes a variety of symptoms such as severe pain, walking difficulties, debilitating fatigue, partial blindness and thinking and memory problems.
- Is more treatable and manageable than ever before, especially with a swift diagnosis and take up of new treatment options.