



Teaching Resource Pack

An activity booklet explaining
MS to students in primary school

This booklet has been devised as an accompaniment to the MS READaTHON, a sponsored read run through schools and libraries. The campaign encourages young people to read while raising much needed funds for families living with MS in Ireland.

Dear Teacher

THIS RESOURCE Pack has been devised as an accompaniment to the MS READaTHON, MS Ireland's sponsored read for young people which encourages them to read while raising much needed funds for families living with MS. We have developed this pack because we think it is important for pupils to be able to understand what MS is and why they are raising money for people with MS. This pack will help pupils connect with the more personal side of the MS READaTHON; supporting families with MS in Ireland.

This pack contains information on two levels

- Any page with a blue edge contains information for the teacher
- Some are facts and figures about MS and others are information sheets on an activity you can do with your class.
- Any page without a blue edge is suitable to be given to pupils (please photocopy as needed) All activities teach children about a different aspect of living with MS.

We wanted to make this resource pack as accessible as possible for teachers so we have outlined below the curriculum areas to which each information sheet is relevant.

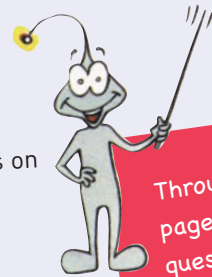
Language (English):

- Learning to read for both functional and social purposes
- Reading for pleasure and information
- Having opportunities to write for a variety of purposes, for different audiences and in a range of genres

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE):

- SPHE requires children to be engaged in activity-based learning
 - Identifying what constitutes a family, emphasising the fact that family units and structures may not all be the same
 - Empathising with others and explore issues from a variety of perspectives
 - Developing a respect for cultural and human diversity in the world and an appreciation for the democratic way of life
- With all this serious subject matter we thought it would be nice to include a little something extra for your pupils to enjoy. At the end of the pack you will find a Q&A section with the MS READaTHON Ambassador Evanna Lynch. Your class will no doubt know her as Luna Lovegood from the Harry Potter films. There is a competition for the class to enter so do encourage them to take part as a reward for learning so much about MS!

Good luck with the MS READaTHON and any lessons you do with your class.



Throughout all these pages there are questions and suggestions you can use with your class. These are marked with a picture of Myelin.

If you need any further assistance or more information on other resources about any aspect of MS or MS Ireland that you think would be beneficial to your class, get in touch



www.ms-society.ie



01 678 1600



read@msreadathon.ie

We hope you find this pack useful and would appreciate any feedback you may have.

FACT SHEET

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a chronic neurological condition that attacks the brain and spinal cord (central nervous system). The central nervous system acts like a switchboard sending electrical messages along the nerves to various parts of the body. Most healthy fibres are insulated by myelin, a fatty substance which aids the flow of messages. In MS, the myelin breaks down or becomes scarred. This distorts or even blocks the flow of messages. It is like a damaged electrical cable where the flex is broken and the wires are exposed.

It is not known why this happens in some people. However, it is thought to be caused by a mix of genetic factors, a faulty immune system and the environment. MS is not hereditary but if MS occurs in a family, other family members are at a greater risk of developing MS. It is the immune system that 'attacks' the myelin as it mistakes it for a foreign substance and begins eroding it. The environment may also play a part as sunnier, warmer countries have a lower incidence of MS than cooler, wetter climates.

Diagnosing MS

MS is very difficult to diagnose as there is no one test; neurologists usually have to eliminate other conditions and diseases first. Also symptoms of MS are most often intermittent and appear and disappear over long periods of time. Many people with MS would usually experience seemingly unconnected symptoms for months or most often years before a diagnosis is confirmed. A medical history, MRI scans and lumbar punctures are common tests used to gradually diagnose MS

Types of MS

There are 4 types of MS

- **Relapsing – Remitting:** This is the most common type of MS. It is characterised by attacks (relapses) and remissions (recovery). During remissions a person would have fewer or no symptoms.
- **Primary Progressive:** Some people with MS never have distinct relapses and remissions. From the start they experience steadily worsening symptoms and progressive disability. This may level off at any time, or may continue to get worse.
- **Secondary Progressive:** This type starts in the same way as relapsing – remitting MS but after repeated attacks the remissions stop and the MS moves into what is known as a progressive phase.
- **Benign MS:** This type of MS generally starts with mild

attacks followed by a recovery. However, occasionally disability may develop even after many years of the disease remaining inactive.

Symptoms of MS

There is no set pattern to MS and everyone affected by it has a different set of symptoms that vary from time to time and can change in severity and duration. Depending where the damage occurs in the central nervous system different symptoms can appear. No two people with MS have the same symptoms.

- **Severe fatigue** – unrelated to the amount of sleep or activity levels
- **Cognitive difficulties** such as loss of concentration and/or short term memory
- **Visual disturbances** including blurring of vision/double vision
- **Bladder and bowel dysfunction**
- **Lack of coordination, balance or mobility**
- **Changes in short-term memory**, concentration or reasoning
- **Altered feelings in arms or legs such as tingling**, pins and needles, numbness
- **Dizziness and vertigo**
- **Speech problems** such as slurring words or slowing of speech
- **Pain**

FACTS

Over **8,000 people** in Ireland have MS. 2.5 million people are living with MS across the world

Ireland: 24 Neurologists
Northern Ireland: 30 Neurologists
Czech Republic: 335 Neurologists

Approximately **250 people** are diagnosed with MS every year in Ireland

MS does not significantly reduce life expectancy, but **quality of life can be affected greatly**

People living further from the equator are more likely to develop MS

There is no cure for MS but all over the world scientists and doctors are **working to further understand MS and ultimately develop a cure**

Two out of every three people diagnosed with MS are **women**

Due to a shortage of neurologists, the waiting time to see one is long

MS is usually diagnosed between the ages of **20 and 40**.

HOW MS IRELAND HELPS PEOPLE WITH MS

MS Ireland is the only national organisation providing information, support and advocacy services for people with MS and their families. MS Ireland offers a wide range of specially designed services and programmes to people with MS, their families and carers. Five of our biggest services are:

Individual family support

MS Ireland provides support for families living with MS. This support includes a home visit service where our trained Regional Community Workers can visit someone with MS (and their family, if needed) to answer questions about MS, offer some emotional support and guide them through the services and supports available. This service is hugely beneficial to those newly diagnosed but is available to anyone concerned about their MS.

Living with MS Programmes

A range of living with MS programmes, workshops and activities are organised throughout the country that are targeted at various groups such as those newly diagnosed, carers, children of parents with MS and health professionals. Programmes include symptom management and information seminars.

Getting The Balance Right is one of our main programmes, providing physiotherapy and exercise programmes to people with MS. All levels of mobility are catered for and people can expect to take part in a number of group or individual activities such as yoga or physiotherapy.

MS Care Centre

The MS Care Centre is the only dedicated respite and therapy centre for people with MS in Ireland. It offers short-term respite care, therapeutic services, neurological assessments and many social activities in a homely environment in Rathgar, Dublin.

Each week 12 new residents stay at the Centre and enjoy a number of social and therapeutic activities such as yoga, massage, day trips, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and a personalised nursing assessment.

40 Voluntary Branches

MS Ireland has a presence in every county in Ireland. Our voluntary Branches are a support network for people and families living with MS in local communities. The services of

the Branch differ depending on the needs of the MS community; however common services include social events, therapeutic sessions and self-help groups. Branches also fundraise extensively to fund their welfare service, which offers financial assistance to members.

Information and Research

MS Ireland provides a range of booklets and information sheets to people with MS and their families. We also operate a confidential information Line (1850 233 233) and a website (www.ms-society.ie) Each year MS Ireland funds medical and social research into different areas of MS. We also work in partnership with other organisations, researchers and colleges conducting research. MS Ireland's information service provides accurate, up-to-date information about MS.

MS Ireland also has other services and is involved in other work for people with MS and their families. These include counselling, conferences, advocacy and training for health professionals.

HOW taking part in the MS READaTHON helps

Each year MS Ireland needs to raise over €4Million to operate all our services. (A little less than this is given by the government through agencies like the HSE). The MS READaTHON is our biggest fundraiser and therefore supports all our services the most.



TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET 1

– What is MS and what are the Symptoms

Introduction

These materials are designed to provide teachers with the best possible approach to teaching primary school classes about what MS is and the symptoms that may occur. Through a variety of activities and illustrations, pupils will gain an insight into what it would be like to experience many of the most common symptoms of MS. The corresponding activity sheets will help the pupils to put what they have learned into practice.

How to use this resource:

Activity Sheet 1a through to Activity Sheet 1d can be used and photocopied - see pages 8 to 12. You will need various materials listed in page 12.

Aims of the activities:

- Explain what MS is
- Describe what happens in the body
- Develop an understanding of the symptoms of MS
- Encourage empathy with people with MS by experiencing mock symptoms

Background Information:

What is MS? (Read the information on page 3)

MS is a disease that is caused when the body attacks the protective covering surrounding our nerves (myelin). Myelin helps the messages our brain send to various part of our body to travel faster. So when your brain thinks 'pick up the pencil' the messages zooms down your arm and picks up the pencil. When the myelin is damaged the message can get lost or arrive late and you might have difficulty picking up the pencil.

There is no cure for MS but there are some treatments that can delay disability or reduce the number of relapses.

What is a symptom? (Read the information on page 3)

A symptom is a sign, sensation or change in a bodily function experienced by a person that indicates they have an illness or are unwell.



Myelin Says: Think of other illnesses and symptoms. What symptoms would you have if you got the flu?

How MS can develop

MS is unpredictable. It's like having a blindfold over your eyes. There is no way of knowing ahead of time if there will be an attack or a remission. So it's very important to live day by day and really try to appreciate the good times.

There is nothing you can do to prevent MS as it is unknown what really causes it.

The ups and downs of MS

Having MS is like travelling through mountains and valleys. There are ups and downs.

The downs are called attacks. That's when new symptoms appear, or when the symptoms of MS get worse. The ups are called remission. That's when the person with MS feels better and the symptoms disappear, or are not as bad as they were before. With MS, some remissions last for weeks, months or even years. Some people don't have remissions or big attacks – symptoms increase little by little, over the years.

There is no set pattern to MS and everyone affected by it experiences a different set of symptoms that vary from time to time and can change in severity and duration. No two people with MS have the same symptoms.

Symptoms can be managed with various medications. A good diet, lots of exercise and a positive attitude are very important in managing MS.



Myelin Says: Here's a handy tip for helping you to remember the ups and downs of MS. When things we don't like attack us, it's called an **ATTACK**. When good feelings return... it's mission accomplished! So that's a **REMISSION**.

Teacher Information Sheet 2

- Families Living with MS

These materials are designed to provide teachers with the best possible approach to teaching primary school classes about families living with MS. Through a variety of interactive activities, illustrations and a real life story of a young girl living with MS, pupils will gain an insight into what it would be like if someone in their family was diagnosed with MS. There is also a video on the website that will come in handy when teaching this topic. The activity sheets will help the pupils to put what they have learned into practice.

How to use this resource

Activity Sheet 2a and Activity Sheet 2b can be photocopied and given to pupils; see pages 13 to 15

Aims of the activities

- Recognise that all families are different
- Recognise that many families across Ireland are living with MS
- Encourage empathy for such families through Abigail's story
- Develop an understanding of what impact MS can have on a family
- Understanding that MS can often change the dynamic of family life

Info about families living with MS:

Living from day-to-day with MS is a combination of many things. Medically, it's about working with doctors to find treatments and interventions that suit the individual and minimise the impact of MS. Socially, it's about finding ways to maintain participation in society through home life, work, leisure pursuits and community activity. Emotionally, it is about finding ways to cope with challenges and maintain good mental health.

MS can change the dynamics of a family and can sometimes affect relationships. Some changes can be big and some can be small. Some are challenging, such as the provision of care to a dependent family member, while others can be very rewarding, such as new hobbies discovered with family members.

Parents who have MS have different ways of explaining the situation to their children. Some wish to protect them and say very little, possibly indicating that 'Mummy's just sick'. Other parents are very open to their children and explain the

condition as appropriate and as needed.

Some children are raised with their parent always having MS and possibly accept better that 'that's just the way my mum is'. Others may be older before their parent is diagnosed and may experience a sense of loss as the parent may become less able to participate in the child's life as before.

As it is unknown how MS will affect a person, it is difficult to predict how it will then affect a family. If someone with MS has mild symptoms, few relapses or a slow disease progression, family life may not change much. Mum may need to sleep a little more or, once a year they may need to go to hospital. This may not be very disruptive for the children. If MS affects the person more severely, family life can change quite dramatically. The mum may be sick quite a lot, carers may need to come into the home and most of the parental duties fall to Dad. This may mean that children take on more household duties, help with younger kids or help to look after Mum. This can lead to feelings of worry, anger, loss and frustration.



Myelin Says: Describe a typical week in your family. Who gets you ready for school, plays games with you, cooks your dinner, or helps you with your homework? What types of things does each person in your family do during the week? If your mum, dad or the person who looks after you was sick for a little while what kinds of things could you do to help them get better and rest.

My Mum has MS

Abigail O'Regan is ten years old and lives in Clonmel with her Mum, Dad and sister Kaitlyn. Abigail's Mum has MS. On page 17 you'll find Abigail's story. Photocopy this for the class and then use the activities on Activity Sheet 2b to interact with pupils. The new My Mum Has MS video can be found on www.msreadathon.ie. This would be a great time to show it to the class.



Myelin Says: I hope you enjoyed watching the video Abigail's Story. How did you feel when you were watching it?

Teacher Information Sheet 3

– Help and Support

These materials are designed to provide teachers with the best possible approach to teaching primary school classes about the value of help and support. Through a variety of activities and illustrations, pupils will learn about the various people involved in the care and treatment of people with MS. The following information will help you explain this area to your class. The corresponding activity sheets will help the pupils to put what they have learned into practice.

How to use this resource:

Activity Sheet 2a and Activity Sheet 2b can be photocopied and given to pupils

Aims of the activities

- **Recognise that everyone needs help and support at some time**
- **Understand what kinds of health professionals are available to people with MS**

Help and support is an important part of everyday life as we all rely on other people to help us in a variety of ways. From childcare and housework to homework and seeking advice, our days are filled with the input for people around us. For people with MS help and support is even more important as life can become more challenging.

Living from day-to-day with MS is a combination of many things. Medically, it is about working with health professionals to find suitable treatments and interventions that can keep you healthy. Socially, it is about finding ways to maintain participation in society through your home life, work, leisure pursuits and community activity. Emotionally, it is about finding ways to cope with challenges and maintain good mental health.

Help and support from family is critical. So too is professional support from health care professionals. As MS differs from person to person the number and level of input from health care professionals differs. Also, as the condition progresses the involvement of health care professionals may also increase.

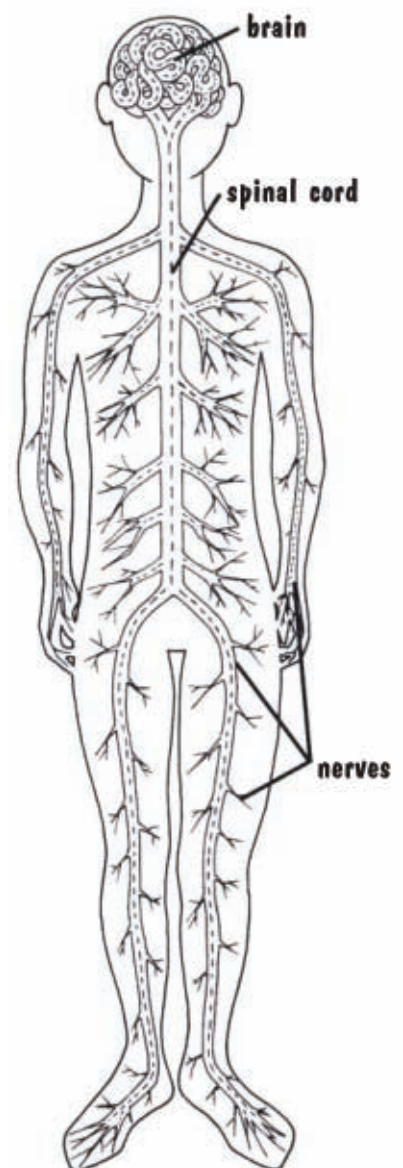
The following health professionals are involved in the treatment and care of people with MS: GP, consultant neurologist, MS specialist nurse; physiotherapist; occupational therapist, speech and language therapist; urologist; counsellor; and carers. Other professionals such as pain specialists, neuropsychologists, continence

advisors and rehabilitation specialists are often involved but we have not included them in the activity sheet.

MS Ireland also has a range of professional staff and services available to people with MS and their families. Often state provided services are unable or inadequate and MS Ireland fills this gap. Our local, regional and national services all aim to 'enable and empower people with MS to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential.' Learn more about our services on page 3 and 4.

What is MS?

MS is a disease that affects nerves in the central nervous system. Over 8,000 people have MS in Ireland



The **brain** is like a computer that sends electrical messages (called **nerve impulses**) to the various parts of the body.

The **spinal cord** is like a big highway connected to the brain. It is filled with nerves where the messages go back and forth. The spinal cord and brain together are called the **central nervous system**.

There are **nerves** all over the human body. They are like little roads that help carry messages to tell your muscles: **MOVE!**

For example, if Mum wants to take a pencil, what happens? Her brain sends a message to her hand to go and get a pencil and bring it near the sheet of paper.



On the drawing of the body use some colouring pencils to draw a line from where the message starts to where it should end up if you wanted to do the following activities:

- Kick a football
- Draw a picture
- Bend your knee
- Wiggle your toes



1

Messages travel 50 metres per second.



2

If the messages get caught in bumps on the road they will slow down



3

If the Myelin is repaired...



4

The message may get to the hand, but more slowly

We don't yet know why, but when a person has MS, the myelin covering the nerves in the brain or spinal cord (sometimes both) is damaged and that causes problems.

It is a bit like when you hurt yourself. Sometimes, you heal well and, with time, nothing shows. Other times, your injuries leave scars. Scars on the myelin are called scleroses - or hardened tissue. Just imagine that the message travelling in a nerve is like a racing car zooming along at top speed on a beautiful highway. Everything goes well until a car encounters an obstacle on the road and can't go any further.

When the road is smooth, messages travel to where they need to go. So if your brain says 'lift up the colouring pencil' the messages zoom down your body to your hand and you pick it up. When you have MS the message gets slowed down on its journey and you can't pick up the pencil or it falls to the floor.

The ups and downs of MS

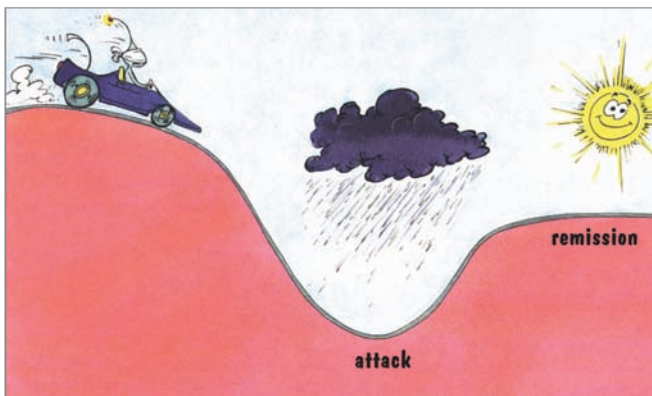
Having MS is like travelling through mountains and valleys. There are ups and downs.

The downs are called **attacks**. That's when new symptoms appear, or when the MS symptoms get worse.

The ups are called **remissions**. That's when the person with MS feels better and the symptoms disappear, or are not as bad.

With MS, some people don't have remissions or big attacks – symptoms increase little by little, over the years.

How MS can develop...



MS is unpredictable. It's like having a blindfold over your eyes. There is no way of knowing ahead of time if there will be an attack or remission. So it's very important to live day by day and really try to appreciate good times.

And above all, it's important not to give up hope! Because now there are medications that help reduce the frequency and severity of attacks.




Did you know?

- MS is not a fatal disease. You cannot die from MS.
- You can't catch MS by touching a person who has it, or by holding an object that this person has touched.
- It is mainly adults between 20 and 40 who get MS - twice as many women as men.
- Despite what we already know about MS, no one can tell in advance who will get this disease.
- Children of persons with MS do not have a significantly higher chance of developing MS as adults.
- MS may be different for each person
- The symptoms of MS may not be too serious and may change over time.
- MS may cause sudden problems, as it is unpredictable.
- Researchers are still looking for a cause and cure for the disease.

Symptoms




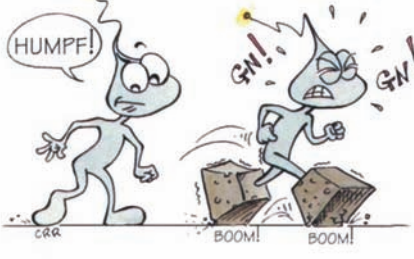



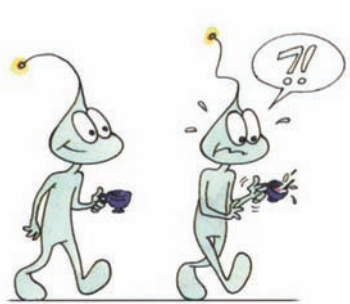
Symptoms are changes that happen in your body when you are sick. For example when you have a tummy bug a symptom could be that your tummy hurts. People with MS get symptoms but no two people get the same symptoms – it's different for everyone.



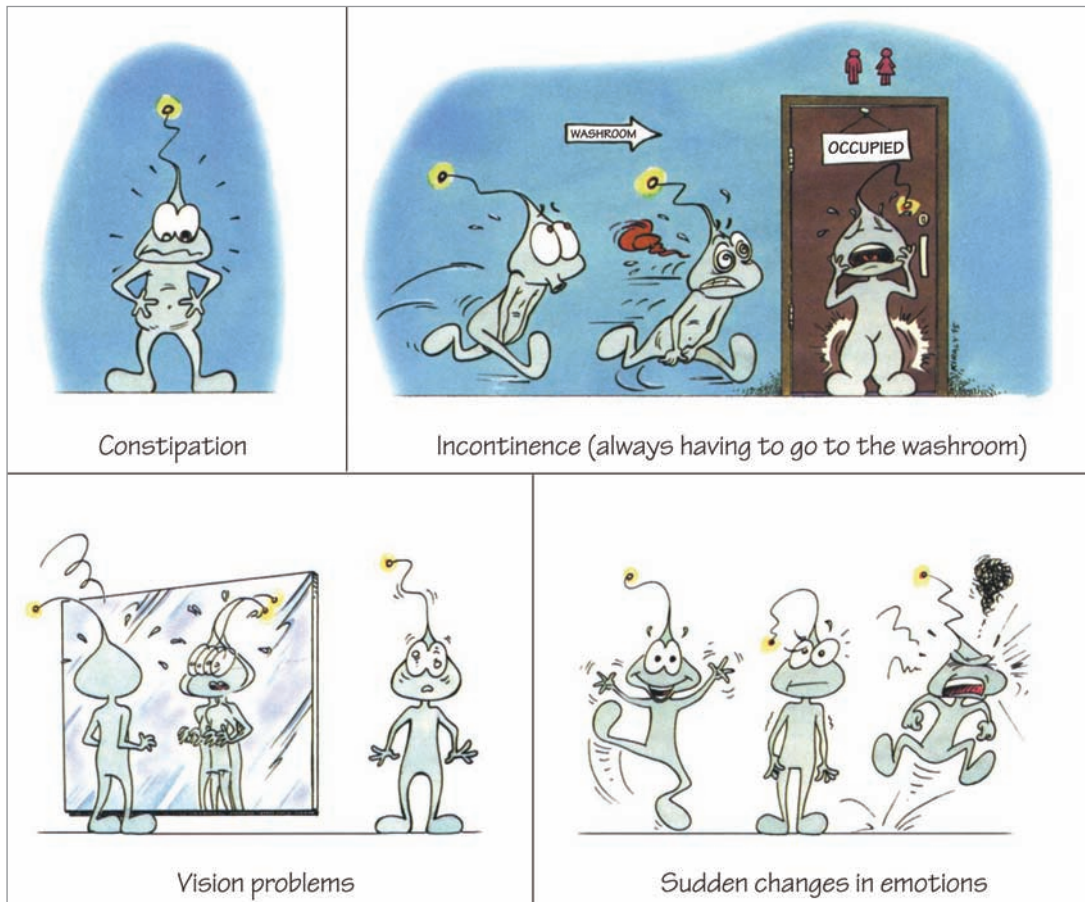
Place a check mark (✓) beside the symptoms your Mum or Dad has. Don't worry, your parent certainly doesn't have all these symptoms!

Below are some of the symptoms of MS. Don't worry no one gets all these symptoms, just some of them.

Possible symptoms of MS

 <p>No apparent problem</p>	 <p>Fatigue</p>	
 <p>Loss of balance</p>		
 <p>A feeling of heaviness or dragging feet</p>	 <p>Loss of sensitivity</p>	
 <p>Speech problems</p>	 <p>Memory problems</p>	 <p>Tingling or shaking</p>

Symptoms



Something to do - find out what it's like to experience some of the symptoms of MS.

How does it feel to have blurry vision?

Some people with MS have problems with their eyes and sometimes can't see things properly. They might not be able to see at all or things become blurry. This usually only happens for short periods of time.

1. Print out or draw a mask on white card paper or a paper plate
2. Paint/colour the masks. Maybe it's an animal or an alien or something else fun to draw and paint
3. Cut out the eye-holes
4. Tear off some cling film the size of a piece of paper. Fold it in half. Then fold in half two more times. With sellotape attach it to the back of the mask over the eye holes
5. Staple some elastic to the two sides of the masks so it stays on your head

How does it feel when your hands are tingling or numb?

Some people with MS get funny feelings in their hands, arms, legs and feet. It sometimes feels like tingling, burning or as if your hand has gone to sleep and it's numb. It feels like you can't really feel the thing you are touching.

1. Find a pair of gloves - gardening gloves, winter woollen gloves, washing up gloves or any other type of gloves.



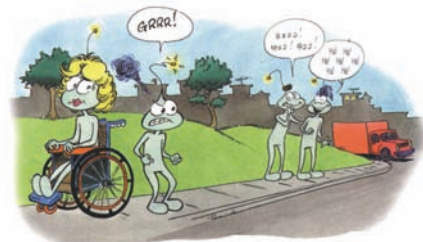
Myelin Says: Try to do the following things with your gloves on; turn the pages of a book, sharpen a pencil, write your name, button up your coat. It's a little more difficult with your hands in gloves, isn't it?

Family Life with MS

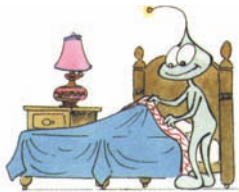
When someone in a family is diagnosed with MS it can be a little scary.



MS is unpredictable and it is hard to tell how it will affect the person in the family. They may be ok and look like they always do. But they may become a little sicker and need to use equipment to help them get around.



They might also need some help from other people in the house. Sometimes the children in the family have to do things to help out.



Helping to keep the house tidy



Helping to cook the dinner



Looking out for brothers and sisters

MS can sometimes mean that Mums and Dads sometimes have to stop doing some activities. But there are always different activities to do instead.



Playing physical games can be difficult for some people with MS

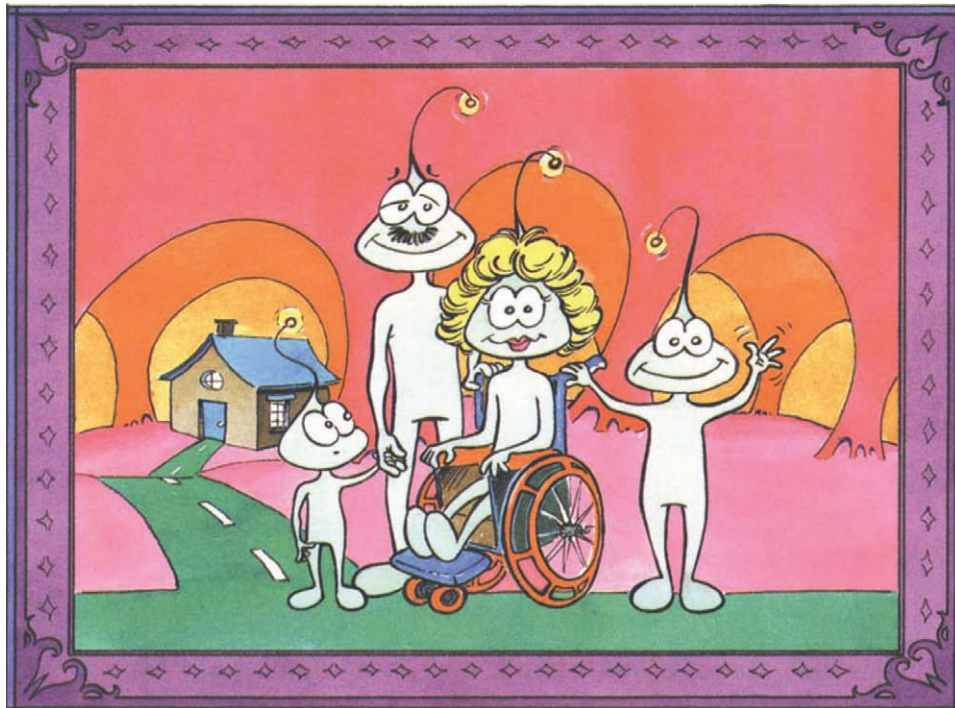


Reading books together can be easier for someone with MS

Family Life and MS

Every family is different and made up of different people. Some families come from different places and some families do things in different ways.

This is Myelin's Family:



Draw Myelin a picture of your family:



Family Life and MS

Abigail is 10 years old and lives with her mum, dad and sister Kaitlyn. Abigail's mum was diagnosed with MS 10 years ago when Abigail was born. You can learn more about Abigail by:

- Asking your teacher to photocopy her story from the teacher resource pack
- Visiting our website
- Watching the video on our website www.msreadathon.ie

Abigail has told you the story of her family and how her mum, Alison, was diagnosed with MS when Abigail was born. Abigail has said how she has learned to cook dinner for her and sister Kaitlyn since her mum is sometimes too tired to help because of her MS.

Q What can you cook? Do you like to help your parents when they are cooking dinner?

Q What things can you do in the house or for yourself that can help your Mum or Dad?

Notebook of Things to do



Now it's your turn to tell me, by writing down in the notebook below, what things you have to do at home.



Place a star ★ next to the new things that you have learned to do. Congratulations!

Abigail's mum has MS. **Q** Write down how you think Abigail's family is just like your family.

Help and Support

Everyone needs help and support to live a happy and healthy life. When we are at school the teacher helps us learn. When we are at home our parents support us to make good choices. When we are with our friends they help make us laugh when we are sad.



Myelin Says: Name five people in your life and describe the help and support they give you.



Health Professionals

A health professional is a specially trained person who can give important help and support to people who are sick or disabled. If you break your arm you might have to see a health professional who can fix the bone in your arm or if your eye is sore another health professional who might give you an eye exam.

When you have MS you might have to see lots of health professionals

What's My Job?

Can you match up these health professionals' jobs with how they can help someone with MS?

Physiotherapist	A special doctor that diagnoses and treats MS
MS Nurse Specialist	A person who can help you move your legs better and keep strong
Neurologist	A person you can talk to about things that worry you
GP	An everyday doctor that usually helps with the symptoms of MS
Occupational therapist	A person who helps you find equipment to make things easier at home or work
Speech and language therapist	A person who comes to your home and helps you get ready in the morning
Counsellor	A nurse that can help you choose medicines and find other health professionals
Carer	A person that can help you speak better or swallow properly



I love cooking and often help my Mum with dinner or make something easy for Kaitlyn and me if Mum's in bed



My name is Abigail.

I'd like to tell you about my family and why I would like you to do the MS READaTHON.

I'm 10 years old and I live with my Mum, Dad and younger Sister Kaitlyn in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. Rebel the dog and our three goldfish live with us too. I am in 5th class and my favourite subjects at school are Art and Maths. I love playing on the trampoline with my sister, my friend Robyn and her sister Lucy. The four of us are in a club called 'The Secret Stash'. A few months ago we had a massive water balloon fight which was so much fun. Oh, and I should mention that my Mum has MS. That means Multiple Sclerosis which is kind of hard to say really.

When I was born my Mum got really sick and had to spend lots of time in hospital. The doctors did lots of tests and finally they said it was MS. Mum says that even though it was scary at the time it was a relief to know why she was sick. I think she was also a little sad because MS doesn't have a cure and you could be sick all your life. So I suppose I don't really know what it's like to have a Mum that doesn't have MS. Some things are probably the same; Mum helps me with my homework, tells me off when I'm being bold and looks after me and Kaitlyn. But some things are different.

My Mum gets really, really tired and has to sleep a lot. She gets pains in her legs and a few times she had to use a stick to help her walk. It sounds strange but sometimes Mum's MS makes her mix up words. Like if she meant to say 'Get out your homework' she might say 'Get out your dinner'. Sometimes we laugh when that happens. Sometimes Mum doesn't.

My Mum has to rest a lot and my younger sister Kaitlyn and I have to do things around the house or help with the dinner. Mum has shown me how to make a few things so I can make pizza or Spaghetti Bolognese in the evening for Kaitlyn and me if Mum is in bed.

When I was seven Mum gave me a book from MS Ireland that explained things. It said that MS is like a busy motorway and cars are like the messages that your brain sends all around your body. Most times the cars zoom around from one place to another but sometimes bumps appear in the road and the cars get stuck or need to slow down. This means that messages don't get delivered properly. When it gets bumpy that's when my Mum starts to feel sick.

I remember the first time I saw my Mum in hospital. It was scary. I didn't recognise her as there were lots of wires sticking into her. But the doctors gave her medicine and she was able to come home. When my Mum can't pick me up from school or is in bed when I get home I think she is getting sick again. I think MS Ireland is really good because they help my Mum. When she was first told she had MS her and my auntie Nikki went to a Newly Diagnosed Day. They spoke to different doctors and got lots of information about MS. They also met other people who were just diagnosed.

Katie from MS Ireland comes over to our house now and again and my Mum gets information and advice from her. Mum also goes to counselling sometimes and special exercise classes to help her legs get stronger.

The MS READaTHON is one way that MS Ireland raise money for all the services they provide. I am doing the MS READaTHON this year for the 3rd time. I love reading and I know that the money I raise will help people like my Mum.

Please sign up for the MS READaTHON today and help my Mum and other people with MS. I can't wait to start! If you can't sign up why not sponsor me? I am going to try and read 20 books this year and MS Ireland think I could raise €10,000 to help people with MS.

Read more at www.msreadathon.ie



MS READaTHON

October 14th – November 14th 2011

'The Inside Scoop' from Evanna Lynch, aka Luna Lovegood!

....making the Harry Potter movies; her co-stars, and why you should all get reading for the MS READaTHON!!

Q: If you could have one magical power what would it be?

I would like the power to be able to understand and converse with animals. I'm sure they have a lot they'd like to tell and teach us if only we could understand their language.

Q: If you weren't Luna what other character would you be?

I have a bit of a thing for Dumbledore. I love his poise and his way with words. And I think he strikes the perfect balance between being wise and philosophical, and frivolous and light-hearted. He also has excellent taste in robes!

Q: What's the funniest moment you had on set?

There were many funny moments, but I particularly enjoyed the Great Hall scenes when we used to dare each other to eat the food laid on the tables. It was coated in a preservative liquid and made the food not nearly as tasty as it looks!

Q: Which of your co-stars is the naughtiest?

Dan can be quite the practical joker and has a very playful edge to his personality. He was always very entertaining during shooting. But I think all of the young cast members have a cheeky side and it comes to the fore when we're all gathered together on the set. During the crowd scenes there was never a dull moment!

Q: Which of your co-stars would you say you know the best?

I'm probably closest to Katie Leung (Cho Chang) and Scarlett Byrne (Pansy Parkinson). Also Jessie Cave (Lavender Brown) and Afshan Azad (Padma Patil). They're lifelong friends whom I feel privileged to know and who I know I'll always stay in touch with.

Q: Which HP movie was your favourite and why?

Very difficult question! Order of the Phoenix will always hold a special place in my heart as it was my first movie and I see those early experiences I had when I watch that film so it means a lot to me. I really love Deathly Hallows part 1 and 2.

Q: What's your favourite book of all time?

The Harry Potter series will always be closest to my heart. I owe so much to J.K.Rowling for what I've learned and gained through the characters and their stories.

Q: What was your favourite book as a child (if different)?

Aside from Harry Potter, 'Stargirl' was my favourite. I enjoyed the Series of Unfortunate Events and the Artemis Fowl books too.

Q: What tip would you give budding readers out there?

Enjoy it! It's your time to be with your thoughts and explore other amazing worlds and learn about other people's minds - all at your leisure. Read about what interests you, not what you feel you should be reading. Reading about things you love helps you get to know yourself and expand on your own ideas. Just read as much as you can about as many subjects as possible!

If you find reading difficult, or you feel you lack the concentration set goals for yourself to read for as little as 10-15 mins a day. Very soon you'll be enthralled by the book and you will not be able to put it down! The best thing about reading is that you'll never regret reading a book, because even if you don't like it it's shaping your knowledge and view of the world, making you into a more cultured and compassionate person.

