

# 8 Things You Should Know if You Have Multiple Sclerosis

By

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JJ Flentke has been sought after for more than 25 years by people who want and need effective physical therapy as they face the challenges of aging, and for many years she worked with seniors in their home with the added focus to help them stay in their home. JJ has devoted the last 15 years to understanding neurological and balance/vestibular challenges in the aging population. She and her team will help you maintain your independence whether that means traveling the world or staying in your own home and avoiding the assisted living facility.



When JJ opened Boomerang Therapy Works it's every detail was designed with people in mind. From the open design, the equipment, the atmosphere and color, to the staff, everyone and everything speaks to the goal of keeping her patients at their best. She wanted a lot of windows for better lighting, plants to optimize the air quality, and a gym like atmosphere that exudes health. At Boomerang you are dealing with a chronic condition, A-G-E, in a healthy environment. You are NOT BROKEN. As a result, JJ has quickly become the authority, sought after by patients who come because their doctors, their families and their peers are all saying, go to Boomerang. Boomerang can help you thrive!

# What You Should Know if You Have MS

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a progressive auto-immune disease that can affect virtually all aspects of your life. MS commonly causes extreme fatigue, changes in mood and cognition, and decreased participation in the things you love to do. The good news is there are things you can do to manage MS and take control of your life. Follow these 8 suggestions so that you can keep doing the things you love and enjoy.

## 1. Strategize for Fatigue

People with MS are often fighting what seems like an uphill battle just to have the energy to complete their daily routines. The answer is not stopping your life and sitting at home all the time. Learning strategies to manage your energy levels may help you. Take breaks to sit and stretch during activities. Spread out your chores throughout the day to avoid using all your energy. Take naps and stay hydrated. Most importantly, listen to your body, because some days may feel better than others. Respect what your body is telling you and avoid over doing it.

## 2. Avoid Over-Heating

Changes in temperature often exacerbate symptoms of MS. Dress to stay cool, avoid exercise in the heat of the afternoon, and using cold or wet towels helps keep your head cool and your core temperature down; reducing the risk of overheating. Staying hydrated is important for maintaining normal core temperatures and fluid dynamics. Some people wear cooling vests when outside or during exercise. Working out in a pool is another way stay fit while staying cool.

### **3. Exercise**

Exercise is important for everyone's health and well-being, but is even more important for people with MS! MS exacerbations are caused by the body's immune system attacking the myelin of the central nervous system (CNS). Inflammation and free radicals cause extra oxidative stress to the CNS which further progresses the disease. Exercise improves the body's natural anti-oxidant systems and reduces inflammation, possibly slowing the progression of MS. Exercise has been shown to improve your mood, decrease symptoms of depression, improve walking and coordination, and decrease fatigue with people who have MS. Maintaining a regular exercise and stretching program may be the difference between you staying at home and getting out to golf or play tennis next season!.

### **4. Healthy Eating**

MS causes the body's immune system to create an inflammatory response that leads to break down of the myelin in your brain and spinal cord. Eating a healthy diet full of fruits and vegetables provides antioxidants and natural anti-inflammatories that decrease the oxidative stress on your body. Processed foods, high in refined sugar, cause increased inflammation and damage to the body that can lead to exacerbation of MS. Research by the MS society has shown that a diet rich in antioxidants can decrease fatigue and may even slow the progression of MS.

## **5. Utilize Technology**

One of the hallmark symptoms of MS is spasticity. Spasticity causes cramping, changes in coordination, and decreased ability to control your limbs. Spasticity can often make walking difficult or increase your risk of losing your balance and falling. Your physical therapist can show you how orthotics and braces or assistive devices like canes and walkers can reduce your fatigue and make you more steady on your feet. Your occupational therapist can fit you with splints for your hands or wrists, teach you strategies to help you get dressed easier, or use technology like sock-aids and reachers that will help you save energy and stay safe while you get back to the things you enjoy.

## **6. Stay in Touch with Your Doctor**

MS causes all sorts of weird and unexpected changes. People with MS often develop vision and hearing problems, vertigo, constipation, bowel and bladder dysfunction, skin issues, and any number of other problems. For many people, MS causes periods of acute flare-ups, triggering sudden decreases in function. Your doctor may be able to prescribe corticosteroids to decrease the effects of these flare-ups. If you are noticing changes in your energy, cognition, balance, libido, vision or are experiencing bladder control difficulties be pro-active and address the problems as they arise. Often there are treatment options available that are more effective at the onset of issues. Don't ignore these problems. Work with your doctor to find the best solution for you.

## **7. Build Your Support Network**

One of the most difficult aspects of MS is the emotional toll it takes on patients and loved ones. Relying more on others to assist you, losing interest in activities you formerly enjoyed, fatigue and chronic pain are just some of the reasons over half of the people with MS have depression. Continuing to socialize and stay active may reduce some of these negative feelings. Learn what community resources are available. There are group fitness classes, and support groups available for people with MS. If you are not a fan of talking in groups, counseling could be a good option for you. Finally, exercise has been found to improve mood and reduce depression.

## **8. Stay Hopeful and Seek Alternative Treatments**

There is still a lot to learn about what causes MS. New and interesting approaches are being explored all the time, and they may delay the progression of MS and improve your quality of life. Acupuncture, mindfulness practice, cold-therapy, hyperbaric chambers and plasma therapy have all shown promise in improving your quality of life. If you have spasticity, botulism injections may provide relief and help you move better. No matter what your current situation is stay hopeful and curious! Do not settle for a sedentary life, keep fighting to do the things you love and enjoy.

# How Can Boomerang Help?

## 1. Physical Therapy

Here at Boomerang, we are neurologic experts. Our physical therapists can help you get stronger, have better balance, improve your energy, and create a regular exercise routine tailored to your needs.

## 2. Occupational Therapy

Our occupational therapist is available to problem solve ways to make your routine easier and save energy. They can also provide input on equipment choices or technology to continue to support you.

## 3. Massage

We have a great massage specialist who can help ease the aches and pains that come from tight muscle!

## 4. Counseling

Boomerang has a counselor who you could meet with if you are struggling and need to talk .

## 5. A Caring Closet—[www.acaringcloset.org](http://www.acaringcloset.org)

A Caring Closet is located next door. This non-profit recycles gently used medical equipment for free to those who need it. You do not have to fill out lengthy forms, just a liability waiver. It's easy, simple and free.

# **Boomerang Therapy Works**

## **Location**

210 W 4th St

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We are located in downtown Vancouver just 2 blocks south of Esther Short Park.

## **Contact Us**

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If you have further questions, concerns or just want to speak to someone, call or email us. We are here for you.

**EXERCISE IS MEDICINE**