



# Ready to Talk MS: Consultation Guide

Making the most of your consultations and getting Ready to Talk MS with your Neurologist

When your consultation date arrives, it is helpful to be ready to talk about your MS, discuss your symptoms, lifestyle, and treatment choices as effectively as possible to support you and your health team to make decisions about your care.

You have a significant role to play in the management of your MS. Making decisions with your health team based on your personal preferences and lifestyle will likely mean you are happy with the treatment decisions made. It also means you are more likely to follow up in the management of your MS, leading to potentially better outcomes<sup>1</sup>.

This type of Shared Decision Making (SDM) ensures that your experience is centered around you, and you are supported by your MS team as much as possible in the process<sup>2</sup>.

This guide aims to help you prepare for any upcoming consultations with your neurologist or healthcare team, make the best use of the time you have together and be **Ready to Talk MS**.



Watch Dr Heather Wilson, Consultant Neurologist at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London, share her top tips on how you can best prepare for your next appointment with your neurologist at [www.livinglikeyou.co.uk](http://www.livinglikeyou.co.uk)

## Preparing for your consultation

Good preparation before a consultation can help you make the best use of the time available.

-  Ask how long your appointment is with your health team. This will help you discuss what is important without running out of time.
-  Keep a diary to record any new or worsening symptoms. The diary can be used during your consultation to provide your neurologist with a brief overview of any new symptoms.
-  Writing down 3-5 of your priority topics e.g., managing your symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment options will remind you to cover these during your appointment.
-  It is beneficial to involve family members, friends, or a carer in your consultations. They can help you take notes, keep track of any important information and ask questions.
-  Read about MS from reputable sources to better understand all the different aspects of living with MS and will support you to have more informed discussions with your MS team.





## Remote appointments

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many MS services and consultations with neurologists have moved to telephone, mobile or online digital formats. This shift is likely to stay as health services get back on track<sup>3</sup>.



Remote appointments can feel very different from speaking to your MS team face to face. There are many benefits to remote appointments, and you can still have meaningful conversations with your MS team over the phone or video chat.



Making sure you have good signal, a steady internet connection and are in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed will help.



Just like face-to-face consultations write down any advice or instructions, ask questions and understand the next steps before the consultation ends.



At any point during your consultation do not be afraid to ask if you **do not understand something**.



If you don't understand any words your healthcare team have used, **ask for them to be repeated or written down and explained**.



## During your consultation



During your consultation, it's important to be open and honest about how you feel.



Any consultation between you and your healthcare professional is a shared, collaborative discussion.



Use this opportunity to discuss your diagnosis, lifestyle, and the risks/ benefits of treatment options available to you.



Give yourself the time you need to understand and reflect on the information that has been shared with you.



## After your consultation

After your consultation, keep notes in one place. These notes can help you:



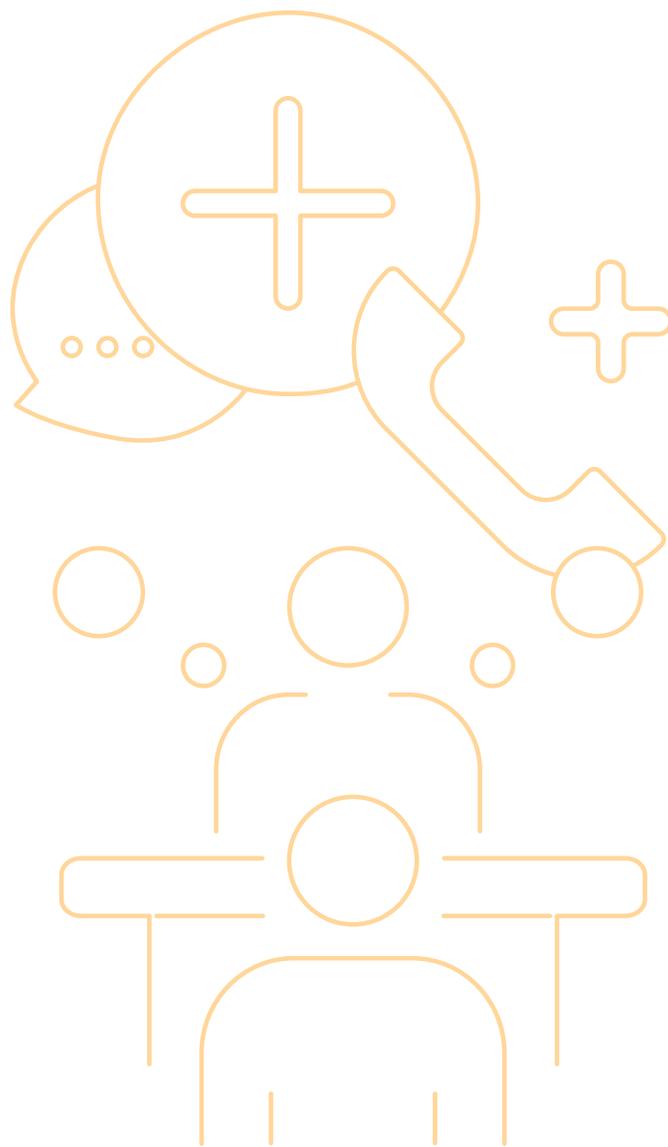
Keep track of any follow up actions, notes and decisions made from your consultation.



Keep a record of names, locations, phone numbers and email addresses for your health professionals.



Store any copies of letters to you or your health professionals.





## Additional support

If you would like to find out more information about **Ready to Talk MS** you can visit [www.livinglikeyou.co.uk](http://www.livinglikeyou.co.uk)

For more information about MS please always speak with your local healthcare provider. Additional patient resources and information can be found on the MS trust website.

Adverse events should be reported. Reporting forms and information can be found at [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard)

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### References

1. Stacey, D. et al. (2014), Decision aids for people facing health treatment or screening decisions, Cochrane Database Syst. Review (1): CD001431
2. Care Quality Commission (2017), Better care in my hands: a review of how people are involved in their care. Available online: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/themed-work/better-care-my-hands-review-how-people-are-involved-their-care> (accessed July 2021)
3. Shift MS. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on multiple sclerosis (MS) management: MS community perspectives. Available from: <https://shift.ms/ms-and-covid-19> [Accessed July 2021]

