

What is MS, exactly?

Elliot: So, what exactly is multiple sclerosis?

To be honest, there's not an easy answer to that question, as it's pretty complicated.

But, in a nutshell, multiple sclerosis, or MS for short, is a condition that damages the nerves in the brain and the spinal cord. Nerves are the things that carry messages between the brain and other parts of your body.

When all this isn't working properly, all sorts of strange symptoms can start happening.

Sometimes people describe it using a hosepipe, without MS, the water would flow ok, but with MS, there's a kink in the hose.

Make sense? We've enlisted the help of some young people affected by MS and two MS experts to explain more.

First up, is Serena, whose mum has MS. she's going to explain about the causes.

Serena: 150 years after MS was first discovered, the cause of MS remains a bit of mystery. But scientists reckon it could be a combination of a few things. Lack of sunlight, genes, germs, and smoking. Hey, maybe you'll be the future Nobel Prize winner who finds the answer.

Elliot: So that's what could cause it, but what about who gets it? Here's Dr Martin Duddy.

Dr Duddy: So MS is a relatively common illness, if you look worldwide we'd estimate there's about 2.5 million affected by the disease. In the UK alone, we think, about 100,000 people. If you start to look at children with MS, a recent estimate would suggest 230 children with MS in the UK, and about 50 going through the diagnostic process.

Elliot: Earlier I mentioned weird MS symptoms, and you might be wondering what kinds of things MS affects? The truth is it affects people in lots of different ways, and varies from person to person. Sometimes you can see MS symptoms, but sometimes they are invisible. Dr David Baker explains more.

David Baker: MS is a problem of altered nerve signalling so it can affect any part of the body because your body is controlled by nerves. So it can affect your eyes, your hearing, your smell, your movement, going to the toilet, front and back end, feeling, pain. You name it. There's many different things that can happen and each person's journey may be different.

Elliot: Can you take anything to help with MS? Eden, who lives with MS, talks about some of the MS treatments.

Eden: So the bad news is that there are no medicines that can cure MS, yet, but the good news is that there are lots of medicines that can help. Some medicines are

hard-core and take on MS itself. They work inside the brain to slow down the damage and stop your symptoms flaring up as much – pretty awesome really. Other medicines are really good at getting rid of those annoying symptoms caused by MS, like when your vision goes all blurry or you get those weird sensations in your arms and legs.

Elliot: So, there you go, hopefully that goes some way to answering the question, what is MS?

If you want to know more, you'll find loads of information on our website at mstrust.org.uk.

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