

## **The Overcoming MS Program incorporates medication as a vital component in managing multiple sclerosis (MS).**

The Program advocates for informed and strategic use of medications to mitigate the effects of MS, reduce relapses, and improve quality of life. Here is a detailed summary of the key points related to medication as per the Overcoming MS Program.

# Core principles



## 1. Informed decisions

Patients are encouraged to make informed decisions about their medication in consultation with healthcare professionals. Understanding the benefits, potential side effects, and long-term implications of each medication is crucial.



## 2. Combination of therapies

The Overcoming MS Program promotes the integration of medication with lifestyle changes such as diet, exercise, and stress management for a holistic approach to MS management.



## 3. Personalised treatment

Treatment plans should be tailored to individual needs, taking into account the type of MS, disease progression, and personal circumstances such as pregnancy and other health conditions.

# Types of medication

## 1. Disease modifying drugs

DMDs are used to reduce the frequency and severity of MS relapses and slow the progression of the disease. Commonly used DMDs include:

- Interferons (e.g., Avonex, Rebif): Help reduce the frequency of relapses.
- Glatiramer Acetate (Copaxone): An injection that helps prevent immune cells from attacking myelin.
- Fingolimod (Gilenya): An oral medication that reduces the number of white blood cells attacking the myelin.
- Natalizumab (Tysabri): An intravenous infusion that prevents immune cells from crossing the blood-brain barrier.
- Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus): The first medication approved for both relapsing-remitting and primary progressive MS.

## 2. Steroids

Steroids like methylprednisolone are used to manage some acute relapses. They reduce inflammation and accelerate recovery from relapses, but don't alter the residual level of disability as a result of a relapse.

## 3. Symptom Management

These medications address specific symptoms of MS, such as muscle spasticity, fatigue, and bladder issues. Examples include baclofen for muscle spasticity and modafinil for fatigue.

## 4. Experimental and Adjunct Therapies

Low-Dose Naltrexone (LDN): Although not widely approved, some evidence suggests LDN may help with symptom management and disease progression.

Biotin: High doses of biotin are being studied for their potential to improve disability in progressive MS.



# Medication considerations



## Side effects

All medications come with potential side effects. Patients should be aware of these and discuss any concerns with their healthcare provider. Common side effects include flu-like symptoms with interferons, injection site reactions with glatiramer acetate, and increased risk of infections with immunosuppressive drugs.



## Monitoring and adjustments

Regular monitoring of the effectiveness and side effects of medications is essential. Adjustments may be needed based on disease activity, side effects, and changes in health status.



## Fertility and pregnancy

Some medications can affect fertility and are not recommended during pregnancy. Women planning to conceive should discuss medication options with their healthcare provider to ensure the safety of both mother and child.



## Cost and accessibility

The cost and availability of medications can vary. Patients should explore their options for insurance coverage, financial assistance programmes, and generic alternatives if necessary.



## Tips for success

### Regular consultation

Maintain regular appointments with a neurologist or MS team to review treatment plans and make necessary adjustments.

### Adherence to treatment

Adhere to the prescribed medication regimen to ensure the best possible outcomes. Skipping doses or discontinuing medication without consulting a healthcare provider can lead to relapse or worsening of symptoms.

### Comprehensive care

Combine medication with lifestyle changes recommended by the Overcoming MS Program, including a healthy diet, regular exercise, and stress management techniques.

### Stay informed

Stay updated on new treatments and research developments. Participate in support groups and online forums to share experiences and learn from others.



The Overcoming MS Program emphasises a well-rounded approach to medication, integrating it with lifestyle modifications to manage MS effectively. Informed decision-making, regular monitoring, and personalised treatment plans are key components of this strategy, aiming to enhance the quality of life for individuals living with MS.



### Learn more

By integrating these principles, the Overcoming MS Program empowers individuals with MS to take control of their health and live fuller, healthier lives.

For more detailed information and resources, visit our website on [www.overcomingms.org](http://www.overcomingms.org)

