

Keep S'myelin

A NEWSLETTER FOR KIDS ABOUT MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

This issue of *Keep S'myelin* is all about teamwork. Just like players on a soccer or baseball team need to work together, there are many people working together on the MS team—including you! The MS team is doing everything it can to find a cure and to help people live more comfortably with MS. As you read this issue with your mom or dad, think about the teammates you know—like your family, teachers, friends, and the National MS Society—and the teammates you don't know—like doctors, scientists, and politicians.

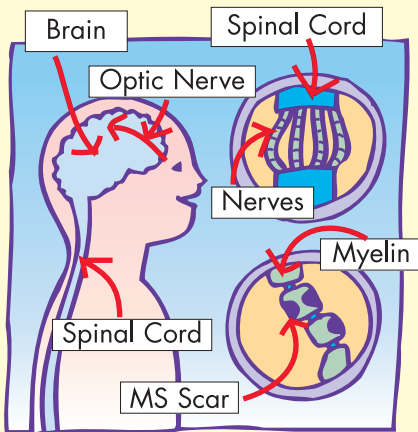
What are all these team members doing to beat MS? The scientists

are working in their laboratories to find out what causes MS and how to cure it. The doctors, nurses, and rehabilitation experts are helping people like your mom or dad to manage their symptoms and be as healthy as possible. People in government are passing laws to assist people with disabilities. The National MS Society helps people learn how to live with MS and raises money for research. You and your family are taking care of each other every single day. And your friends and teachers are there when you need some extra smiles and support. It's good to know that no one living with MS is alone.



MS

Multiple sclerosis (MS for short) is a disease that affects the central nervous system (the brain, optic nerve and the spinal cord.) The brain is like a computer that tells the body what to do. The spinal cord is like a thick wire attached to the computer. Messages travel from the brain, along the spinal cord, to the other parts of the body.



When a person has MS, the covering (myelin) that protects the nerves gets damaged. Scars form where the myelin is damaged. As messages travel from the brain, they sometimes get stuck or slowed down by these

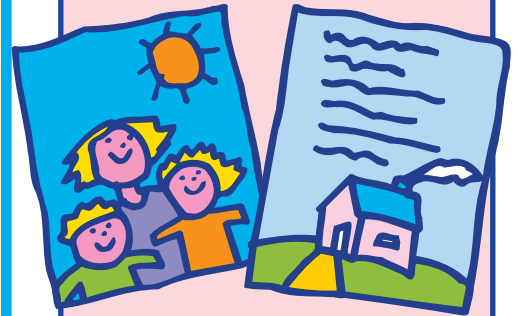
scars. When this happens, the other parts of the body can't always do what the brain is telling them to do.

Sometimes people with MS have trouble seeing. Sometimes their arms and legs feel weak or their skin feels "tingly" (like pins and needles.) Sometimes they lose their balance, or sometimes it's hard to walk. MS problems like these are called symptoms. Symptoms of MS can come and go...we don't know exactly why. Sometimes you don't even notice the symptoms. At other times they are pretty obvious. It's hard for a person with MS to know from one day to the next how he or she will feel. That is why we say that MS is unpredictable.

Interesting Fact:
*Multiple means many.
Sclerosis means scars.
So, multiple sclerosis
means "many scars."*

Keep S'myelin Readers:
WE WANT YOU!

We love to publish your pictures, stories, and poems about MS. Please send us your work! Tell us how your family learns about MS together, how you feel about having MS in your family, or what advice you would give other kids about having a mom or dad with MS.



Send to:
National MS Society
KEEP S'MYELIN
BROADWAY STATION
900 South Broadway
Suite 200
Denver, CO 80209
or e-mail to
keepsmylein@nmss.org



INTERVIEW WITH

CRISTINA

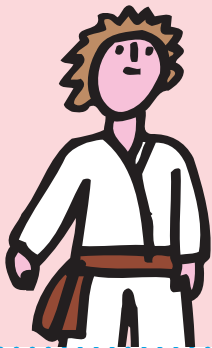


Cristina is 14 years old and a freshman in high school. She lives in Everett, Massachusetts with her aunt and her dad, who has had MS since Cristina was born. Cristina has a brown belt in karate and is a cheerleader at her school.



KS: How does MS affect you and your family?

Cristina: My dad has had MS for a long time, but lately it has gotten worse. He can't do many of the things he used to do without the help of his family. I felt worried when he started to get worse. I try to make sure I get everything done and done right, like keeping my grades up, helping him out and trying to deal with the situation as best as I can. It can be stressful.



KS: Who are some of the people who help you and your family cope with MS?

Cristina: My English teacher: He is almost part of my family! He has really helped me and he encouraged me to call the National MS Society. That's where I got *Keep S'myelin* and I also got some other books about MS that are really helpful. He is someone I can talk to about how I feel.

My three best friends: They are always there for me. I can let out all my feelings with them, and they also will come over and help me with chores and taking care of my dad so it will give me a break! But even though they are always there for me, they can't always know how it feels to see someone you love have a hard time.

My neighbors across the street: I've known them my whole life and they help us out. If my dad falls, they come over and help get him back up.
My grandmother: She comes over during the day to help my dad.

KS: What advice would you give other kids who have a mom or dad with MS?

Cristina: ♦ **Don't hold in your feelings.** Talk or write about them. I write poetry about how I feel. It's interesting to look back on some of the poems I wrote a while ago. I can see that things can progress and get better!
♦ **Make time for yourself.** Make time for yourself to just be a kid!
♦ **Don't give up!** Find someone to talk to if you feel stressed, and think about the good things in your life!

The MS Team

In addition to your family, there are many people in your life who help you every day! Everyone plays an important part on your "MS Team."

Write the names of some of your team members below.

My 'MS Team'



Your friends: have fun with you

Your teacher: listens to you and answers your questions

National Multiple Sclerosis Society: helps you and your family learn about MS and meet other families

MS researchers: work to find a cure for MS

Physical therapist: helps people with MS with exercises

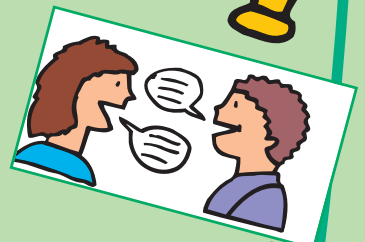
Neurologist: takes care of people with MS

Counselor: helps families talk about MS together

Occupational therapist: helps people with MS learn how to do day-to-day activities more easily

Speech therapist: helps people with MS if they are having difficulty talking

Nurse: helps people with MS learn about taking medicines and how to be as healthy as they can be



The MS Research Team

MS research is moving faster than ever before. Every day scientists are getting closer to the answers we need to important questions: What causes MS? What can cure MS? What can prevent MS from happening to someone else?

We are finding answers more quickly because scientists from all over the world use teamwork. They are putting their heads together and sharing information. Computers help them talk to one another about their ideas and the results from their experiments. They can give each other help without having to be in the same place! Just like the teamwork it takes to score a goal in soccer, or build a skyscraper, or send a man to the moon, it takes teamwork to find the answers to MS.

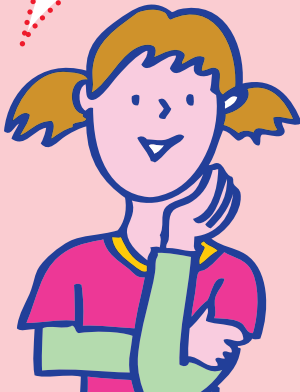


YOU ASKED

WE ANSWERED

Dear Keep S'myelin:

I worry when my dad has to go to the hospital. How do I know he'll be OK?



Worrying about the people you love is normal. When you have worries it helps to talk to an adult about them. An adult, like your mom or dad, another relative, or your teacher, can help you understand why your dad is in the hospital, what kind of treatment the doctor is planning to give him, and when he'll be home again. Understanding more about MS can help you worry less, and talking about your feelings can help you feel less afraid or angry or sad. Ask if you can visit your dad. Seeing him will help you feel better, too.

MICHAEL CRYSTAL AND BENJAMIN
S'MYELIN KIDS



IT'S BEEN BUSY AT OUR HOUSE TODAY. MY MOM'S PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAME OVER TO DO EXERCISES WITH HER. THEN OUR NEIGHBOR HELPED MY MOM ORGANIZE HER OFFICE, AND MY SISTER AND I DID THE LAUNDRY.




GEE, WHEN EVERYONE HELPS, THINGS REALLY GET DONE!


IT'S JUST LIKE A TEAM. EVERYONE PITCHES IN AND EVERYONE WINS!


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TEAMWORK

Families can count on the National MS Society. To learn more about the resources available to you and your family, please contact an MS Navigator at 1-800-344-4867.

JOKES

What do you call a sleeping bull?

A bull-dozer

What do dogs eat at the movies?

PUP-CORN

What sound do porcupines make when they kiss?

Ouch