

The Parkinsonism Society of New Zealand (Inc)

Parkinsons New Zealand is a voluntary, non profit organisation that offers support, education and information to people with Parkinsonism conditions, the most common being Parkinson's disease. Parkinson's NZ has divisions and support groups nationwide.

We can offer

- ▶ Further information on Parkinson's and Parkinsonism conditions including MSA
- ▶ Regular up-to-date information through our national magazine
- ▶ Responsible reporting of recent research
- ▶ Books and audio-visual material
- ▶ Local meetings and education programmes
- ▶ Advice on health and welfare assistance available
- ▶ Support from a professional Field Officer in your area.

Parkinsons New Zealand is reliant on funding from grants, bequests and donations. Your support is welcome!

Divisions/support groups provide:

- ▶ Fellowship
- ▶ Information
- ▶ Support
- ▶ Newsletters
- ▶ Activities.

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Multiple System Atrophy MSA

Some answers to your questions about MSA



Your Society provides:

- ▶ **Field Officer Service**
- ▶ **Education**
- ▶ **Support**

Your local contact:

Multiple System Atrophy (MSA)

What is MSA?

Multiple system atrophy (MSA) is a rare progressive neurological disorder presenting with similar symptoms to Parkinson's disease. The condition is marked by a combination of symptoms affecting movement, blood pressure, and other body functions; hence the label multiple system atrophy.

Various forms of MSA

Symptoms of MSA vary from person to person. Because of this, three different diseases were initially described to encompass this range of symptoms: Shy-Drager syndrome, striatonigral degeneration, and olivopontocerebellar atrophy.

What causes MSA?

The cause of MSA is unknown.

Symptoms of MSA?

MSA can cause a wide range of symptoms, including:

- ▶ orthostatic hypotension, or a significant fall in blood pressure when standing, causing dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting, or blurred vision
- ▶ male impotence
- ▶ loss of control of bowel or bladder
- ▶ stiffness or rigidity
- ▶ freezing or slowed movements

- ▶ postural instability; loss of balance; lack of coordination
- ▶ speech and swallowing difficulties blurred vision
- ▶ changes in facial expression.

Who gets MSA?

MSA usually starts between the ages of 50-60 years, although it can affect people younger and older than this. Around 4 in 100,000 people are affected by MSA in New Zealand. MSA does not appear to be hereditary and is not infectious or contagious. It is a sporadic disorder that occurs at random.

How is MSA diagnosed?

Often symptoms are vague and diagnosis is difficult. MSA is often mistaken for Parkinson's, especially in the early stages of the condition. Diagnosis should be made by a specialist, usually a neurologist.

What is the treatment?

Currently there is no specific treatment for MSA. A variety of medications, including some drugs used for Parkinson's, and other forms of therapy can help control the symptoms. Treatment may focus on alleviating the symptoms, so people with MSA could benefit from working with physiotherapists, speech therapists, dieticians, continence nurses, and occupational therapists.

What is the prognosis?

MSA is a progressive disorder, the rate of progression differs in every person.

To the person with MSA and their family

The diagnosis of MSA has significant impact on those close to the patient. As the condition progresses so does the need for care. Carers/families may feel isolated, frustrated and chronically tired. Infinite patience is needed. Carers/families will need support and should utilise support services. Support services can be contacted directly or referral can be made through your doctor or health professional.

Further resources on the internet

Further information about MSA is available on the internet, the following sites may be of interest:

www.msaweb.co.uk

www.neurosy.org/disease/msa/msa

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000757.htm

www.neurologychannel.com/msa