

# Myasthenia Gravis

## Why Your Condition Could Get Worse

There are a number of things that could make your myasthenia gravis symptoms worse, such as:

- Illness
- Stress or tiredness
- Pregnancy or monthly period
- Certain medications, such as beta blockers, quinidine gluconate, quinine, quinidine sulfate, phenytoin, some anesthesia drugs, and antibiotics

## Diagnosis: Tests

You may get an edrophonium test, where you get a drug to relieve eye problems while your doctor sees how you react. A blood test can check for higher levels of certain antibodies. An electric stimulation test sees how quickly your muscles tire. An electromyography checks the signal from nerves to muscles. CT scans or MRIs look for a larger than normal thymus gland or for tumors on the gland. And a lung test may be useful to help your doctor predict a myasthenic crisis.

## Treatment: Medications

Your doctor might suggest you take:

- Anticholinesterase medications to improve the sending of signals to your muscles.
- Immunosuppressive drugs to help improve muscle strength by slowing or stopping the making of harmful antibodies.

# Treatment: Intravenous (IV) Therapies

IV treatments add or remove blood and medicines through a needle in your vein, usually in the arm. You typically get them when symptoms suddenly get worse. They sometimes help for up to a few months.

- Plasmapheresis removes plasma (part of your blood) to get rid of harmful antibodies and replaces with good plasma.
- Intravenous immunoglobulin gives you normal antibodies to change how the immune system is working.
- Monoclonal antibodies are medications sent through an IV and usually only used after other treatments fail.

## Outlook

If you take your medication and follow your doctor's guidance, you can often improve your muscle weakness quite a bit and lead a mostly normal life. In some cases, your symptoms may go away completely, which is called "remission." You might not need medicine any longer. About half of all people with myasthenia gravis who have surgery to remove their thymus gland go into a long-lasting remission.

[Exercise](#) can help ease [multiple sclerosis symptoms](#), but you have to be careful if you want your [workouts](#) to work for you. The most important thing: Don't overdo it.

No doubt you've heard the sayings "no pain, no gain" or "feel the burn," but that isn't good advice when you have MS. Doing too much can strain your muscles, increase pain, and put too much stress on your body and your mind. Never exercise to the point of fatigue.

Check with your doctor before you start any [fitness program](#). They may suggest:

- Types of [exercise](#) that are best for you and those you should avoid. The right moves depend on your symptoms, fitness level, and overall health.
- How long and intense your workouts should be
- Any physical limitations for your routines
- Other professionals, like a physical therapist, who can help you build a personal [exercise program](#) that meets your needs

#### Types of Exercise to Try

**Aerobics.** Not only does it get your heartbeat up, it lifts your mood. Walking, running, and biking are all good. If you have leg weakness or other problems moving, try something like rowing or water aerobics.

**Stretches.** They're good for anyone with MS, but they're most helpful if you have painful muscle stiffness and spasms. Pay special attention to muscles that tend to get tight and spasm, like the quadriceps, hamstrings, and calves. Do exercises that take your joints through their full range of motion.

Aside from regular stretches, yoga and tai chi are great ways to build strength and flexibility. They can also help you relax and fight stress.

**Strength training.** If your physical therapist says it's OK, use weights or resistance exercises to build your muscles. The stronger you are, the easier it'll be to move around. If you get a muscle spasm in the middle of your routine, stop and wait a few minutes for it to relax.

## Tips for a Safe Workout

**Take it slow.** Always warm up first. Ease into your routine. If all you can manage is a walk around the block -- or across the room -- that's fine. Start with that and keep it up. In time, you'll build up your strength and be able to do much more.

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### SUGGESTED

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**Stay safe.** Avoid places with slippery floors, poor lighting, throw rugs, or other tripping hazards. Choose activities that won't make it likely for you to fall, like stationary biking or swimming. You may want to have a grab bar or rail nearby. Work with your physical therapist on stretches and strength training to improve your balance and coordination.

**Know when to quit.** If you feel pain or sickness during exercise, stop. If symptoms start to flare up, change or end your routine. Talk to your doctor. While you're healing, get lots of rest. Once you start feeling better, your physical therapist can help get you back on track.

**Find a balance.** If you can do vigorous exercise, that's OK, but make sure your workouts don't make you too weak. If you're so tired or sore afterward that you can't prepare dinner, you need to reassess. On a good day, it's tempting to push yourself, maybe walk an extra mile. But overdoing it today could leave you feeling crummy tomorrow. Stick to your normal pace.

**Keep it fun:** Choose an activity you enjoy. Try water [aerobics](#), [swimming](#), [tai chi](#), and [yoga](#), which often work well for people with MS.

**Cool down:** When you're done, always take time to let your heart rate, body temperature, and breathing get back to normal.

#### What If You Get Overheated?

If you're sensitive to heat, your symptoms may show up or get worse when your [body temperature](#) rises. This will happen when you exercise. To avoid overheating:

- Don't exercise during the hottest part of the day (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.). Try to work out in the morning or evening if you're exercising outside.
- Drink plenty of cool water.
- Be aware of your body. If you notice any symptoms you didn't have before you started exercising, slow down or stop until you cool down.
- [Swimming](#) and water [aerobics](#) are good ways to stay cool while you work out. Just make sure there are nonslip floors in the locker room and around the pool.