

MS

National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

ISSUE #15/MOVING WITH MS

Keep S'myelin

A NEWSLETTER FOR KIDS ABOUT MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

MOVING WITH MS

Have you noticed that some people with MS use a cane to help them walk? Others use a wheelchair or a scooter to get around. Still others walk just fine without any help at all.

A person with MS might need a cane or wheelchair at certain times and not at others. Some people use a wheelchair when they go to the museum or to the shopping mall, but inside their house, where they do not have to walk long distances, they may do fine without the wheelchair.

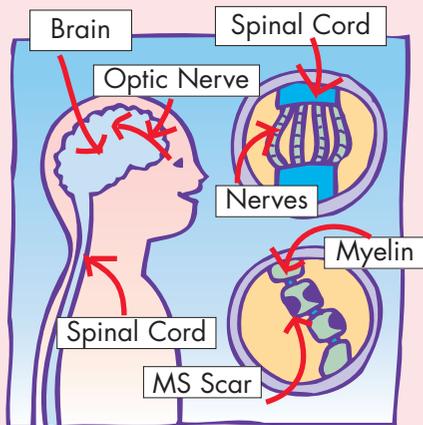
All of these differences may seem very confusing. But as we know, MS is variable; it differs from person to person*. How someone with MS is able to walk and move may also vary from day to day.

In this issue of Keep S'myelin, you will learn about the different equipment people with MS can use to help them move around.

*To learn more about the ways that MS is a variable disease, see Keep S'myelin, issue 14.

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, what advice you would give other kids about having a mom or dad with MS, how you help your mom or dad, or whom you talk with about MS.



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



INTERVIEW WITH

COURTNEY

Thirteen-year-old Courtney lives in Rochester, Minnesota with her mom and dad, two sisters, and a golden retriever named Gypsy. She is home-schooled and loves to jump on her outdoor trampoline with her little sister and play Frisbee golf with her older sister and friends. Courtney's mom has had MS since Courtney was about 7 years old.

KS: What kind of equipment does your mom use to help her get around?

Courtney: At first, she didn't need to use anything. Then after a while, she started using a cane and now she uses a wheelchair to go to church and to go shopping, a walker around the house, and her scooter when she goes into the yard to pick things from the vegetable garden.

KS: Was it hard for you when she started to need these things?

Courtney: At first, she could do lots of stuff with us, and then, when she needed these things, we were sad about it. But now we're used to it and we're grateful that she is happy!



KS: How did you learn about MS?

Courtney: When my mom was first diagnosed, we didn't know anything about MS. My mom and dad talked to us about it and helped us understand. Also, now we go to **MS Camp*** and we see other kids who are in the same situation. We can ask questions there that we might not want to ask our mom or dad, because it might hurt their feelings.

KS: Have you ever tried your mom's scooter or wheelchair?

Courtney: When we first got the scooter, my mom let us ride it up and down the sidewalk and we tried the wheelchair too. They're hard to drive!

KS: Have you had to make any changes to your house for the wheelchair and scooter?

Courtney: Our neighbor is building us a ramp from the porch to the yard so my

mom can get out to the garden.

Also, we moved about two years ago to a house that is on one level. It's

easier for my mom to get around.

KS: What advice would you give to a kid who just found out his or her mom or dad has MS?

Courtney: It really helps to talk about it. Talk to your family about MS. Remember, things could be a lot worse! Keep your mind set on the good things—MS has really brought our family closer together.

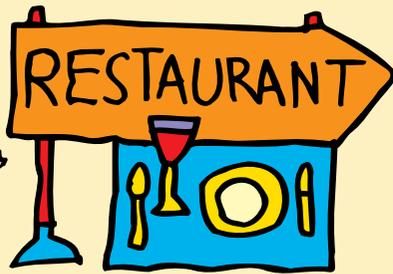
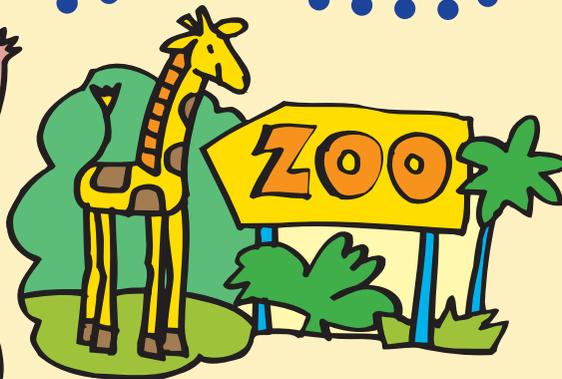


*While not all chapters offer MS Camp many do offer specific programs for children and families. To learn more about these and other types of programs in your area, contact an MS Navigator® at 1-800-344-4867.

LOTS OF WAYS TO

Here is some equipment that can help people with MS move around. Some people with MS don't need this type of help, or only use this equipment once in a while.

SCOOTER:
This scooter runs on a battery.

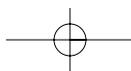


CANE (DECO)
These canes are pretty decorated.



POWER WHEELCHAIR:
This wheelchair runs on a battery. You steer the wheelchair by moving the "joy stick."





HOW TO GET AROUND



WALKER (WITH WHEELS AND SEAT)

This walker has wheels and is easy to push. It has a basket for carrying things and a little seat a person can use when he or she gets tired.



CRUTCHES (FOREARM)

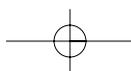
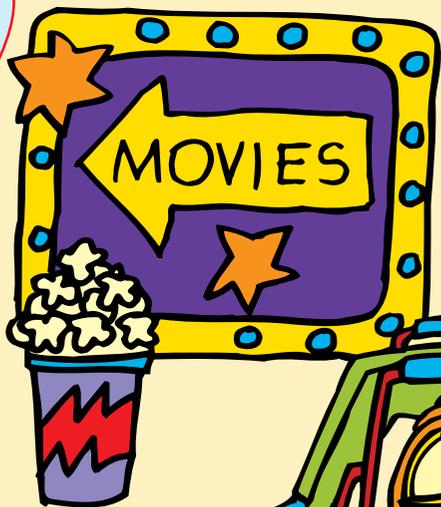
These crutches attach to the forearms and help a person walk.



MANUAL WHEELCHAIR:

The person sitting in this wheelchair moves and steers by pushing on the large wheels. This wheelchair folds up and is easy to put in a car.

(DECORATED)
...nes have
decorations!



MICHAEL CRYSTAL AND BENJAMIN

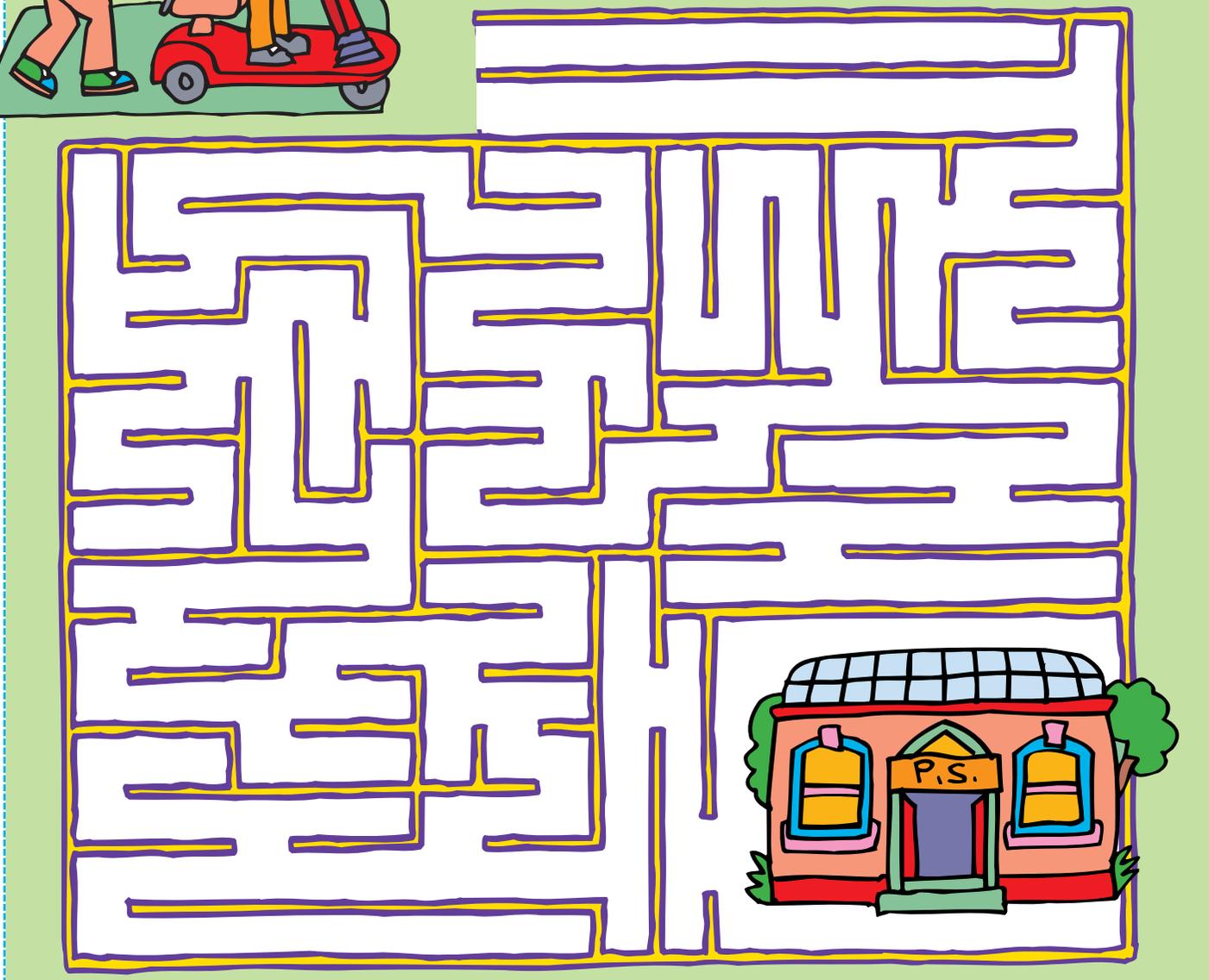
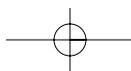
S'MYELIN KIDS

1. I'M SURE GLAD OUR TOWN MADE THESE LITTLE RAMPS AT ALL THE INTERSECTIONS. NOW, YOU CAN WALK ME TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY!

ME, TOO! AND IT'S NOT ONLY PEOPLE WHO USE WHEELCHAIRS WHO LIKE THE CURB CUTS!

2.

3. IT'S NICE WHEN PLACES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE. THAT'S A NEW WORD I LEARNED - IT MEANS A PLACE WHERE IT'S EASY FOR EVERYONE TO MOVE AROUND.



JOKES

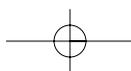
GRR...

Why can't the leopard escape from the zoo?
Because he keeps getting spotted

What starts with E, ends with E, and only has one letter?
An envelope

What does a dentist call his X-RAYS?
Tooth-pics

7





National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society



Contact the National MS Society at 1-800-344-4867.

YOU ASKED

WE ANSWERED

Some days my mom can walk pretty well with just a cane, but other days she can't go very far at all without her scooter. Why isn't her walking the same all the time?



When a person has MS, his or her symptoms can change from one day to the next, and even from morning to afternoon on the same day! These changes seem to be caused by many things, including how hot it is outside or how tired the person is that day. Some days, people just wake up feeling stronger or weaker than they did the day before, and no one really knows why. Your mom is very smart to use whichever piece of equipment helps her feel safe and steady, so she can go everywhere she wants to go.