



MS Learn Online
Feature Presentation
Healthy Living with MS: Physical Health
Special Guest: Clay Walker

Kate: Hi everyone, welcome to *MS Learn Online*. I'm Kate Milliken your host for the first program in a special three-part series *Healthy Living with MS: Featuring Clay Walker*.

Clay Walker stepped into the national spotlight in 1993 with his number one country hit, "What's It to You." Since then, he's had 31 singles on Billboard's country charts, eleven of them number one. He's had four platinum and two gold albums, and has consistently been one of the busiest artists on the road.

In 1996, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Despite his incredibly busy schedule, Clay's been an active participant in the MS movement. In 2003 He created *Band Against MS*, a non-profit organization committed to providing educational information and funding research programs and services to help those living with the disease To date, *Band Against MS* has raised more than two million dollars.

We're thrilled to have Clay back for a second MS Learn Online special in which he'll share his own personal experiences about living well with MS.

(Applause)

Kate: When I first learned I have MS, I decided that I wanted to do everything I could to keep MS from taking charge of my life. I did a ton of research, I asked my doctor lots of questions and took advantage of many

of the resources that are available through the National MS Society. But I also get plenty of information and inspiration from people who are living incredibly full and rewarding lives despite their MS. And Clay Walker is a great example. Through his everyday actions and attitude he has made adjustments that have helped him keep MS off “center stage” in his life.

In this series, we’ll focus on three topics and ways we all can make adjustments to live healthier and happier lives with MS: Taking care of our physical health, maintaining our emotional health, and how to manage MS while maintaining balance in our daily lives.

Also joining us in our discussion is Dr. Rosalind Kalb, a clinical psychologist and the Vice President for the National MS Society’s Professional Resource Center.

I’d like to extend a special welcome to members of our studio audience here with us today in Houston, thank you. I’d also like to thank all of you who have sent in questions to help get this webcast off to an exciting start as well as everyone who has logged on to learn more about MS.

Let’s begin by looking at the ways we can all maintain our physical health despite having MS. Here’s a quote from someone who knows something about staying healthy with MS ... former ski champion and proactive MS advocate, Jimmy Heuga.

“I am dedicated to maintaining my overall health so I’ll be ready for (a cure) when it happens. But also because it helps me live the best life possible with MS.”

Someone else who knows about living the best life possible with MS is Clay Walker. Let’s see what he does to stay physically healthy.

Clay: I believe you have to take care of your body and I think you have to have a very good outlook and good attitude towards it. I try to ride bikes, as well as riding horses, cutting horses and play golf.

I'll try a little bit of everything, I'll try yoga, for the stretching part of it is very fun, my family laughs at me but its, it's a lot of fun to do and I feel , better when I get done. Once I had MS I think I wanted to do more physical activity than before I was diagnosed, I feel like all those physical activities only help strengthen me.

Kate: So Dr. Kalb talk to us about the importance of physical fitness and staying active with MS.

Dr. Kalb: I think that all of us need to stay physically active and in good shape, because we all feel better. But when a person has MS and is dealing with all the symptoms that MS can cause, particularly that fatigue than can be so draining and difficult. Staying physically fit helps you be in the best possible shape to deal with that. You feel stronger, you're more in charge and you it helps you stay on top of things. So I think it's just incredibly important to stay in good shape because you can be healthy even if you're living with something like MS.

Kate: So Clay, besides rocking the charts, tell us about what you do to stay active.

Clay: Cheeseburgers! (Laughs) Oh man. I'm an active person, I always have been. I think, I'm probably in better, better physical shape right now, then I was before I was diagnosed with MS. I'm not crazy, ovetop about exercising, I do a little bit of it. But I do stay active, on the road with the band I play basketball, we ride those road bikes like Lance Armstrong with the tight britches. And I ride cutting horses', play a little bit of golf from time to time. I really just have fun. I don't look at working out as working. I try to get the garden at home, do the yard. Do things that just keep me moving. It's more fun that way. Its not like, okay I gotta have a regiment, so maintain a pretty good diet, you know I'm not over the top about that either, but I'm more aware then I was before I was diagnosed with MS.

Kate: Do you feel that in light of your exercise regiment when you didn't have MS, has it altered as a result of having MS?

Clay: Before I had MS I spent a lot of time in athletics. All through high school I played football, but after, after being diagnosed with MS, I did

start looking at it as something that was necessary and good for me. And enjoying the results of it. So you know when I first started working out after being diagnosed with MS, I had some right leg weakness, which made my gait a little uneven if I would run on the treadmill and so I was embarrassed to go to a public facility and do some of these things. Now, so I started walking privately, then jogging a little bit, kind of a run jog thing and then I built up where I could jog three miles without stopping. I noticed that doing this or riding a bike especially increased the strength in my hip flexor in my right leg and also it increased my range of motion where now I'm normal when I walk .

Kate: Let's ask Dr. Kalb. From your perspective, talk to me about diets.

Dr. Kalb: You need to pick a health regimen that you enjoy and that is realistic and that you can maintain. The diet that we recommend for people with MS is the same low fat, high fiber diet that we recommend for everybody in the population. To maintain your weight, and healthy heart, there are some supplements out there that people with MS want to try. There's some evidence for example, for the omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids that they may help people with MS. We know there is a lot in the literature these days about vitamin D, and how we all need that for bone health. And it may also be helpful to MS. The problem is that we don't have exact data to tell us how much of anything is good, or safe or effective. So my general recommendation is to stay with that balanced diet, and if people want to try supplements of any kind, just to be sure that they discuss it with their physicians ahead of time, because some of these can interact with your immune system or with other medications that you're taking in ways that are not good for you. So it's always to check it out.

Kate: Dr. Kalb go back to the physician comment that you made. In the most recent issue of *Momentum* magazine a survey indicated that 67% of the readers saw their primary care physician more than once a year. So how important is it for people with MS continue to go to their primary care physician?

Dr. Kalb: I actually think it's incredibly important because the neurologist who's treating the MS is really focused on MS care. That's his or her expertise and in that relatively short doctor visit that we're all familiar with these days, there simply isn't time for the MS doctor to focus on all the other aspects of health. And while somebody who has MS may feel that's more than enough for anyone person to handle, the fact is, having MS doesn't protect people from all the other things that all of us get like heart disease, or cancer or stroke. So it's important to check in with that family Doctor, general practitioner once a year to make sure you're getting the preventive healthcare that you need. And all the tests that are appropriate for your age, so I really advocate that people maintain that solid relationship.

Kate: Let's actually go to the studio audience, to Suzanne. Suzanne, you have the question, hi.

Suzanne: What I was gonna ask you is, I know you that were playing in a Golf tournament and everything, when you work out are you heat sensitive?

Clay: Not at all. As a matter of fact I'm cold sensitive. But in the heat is where I perform the best it's just the craziest thing.

Suzanne: So what happens when it's cold?

Clay: I'll get a little stiff and my muscles feel stiff, so before I start walking I have to stretch a little bit then I can walk just fine.

Suzanne: So when you're on stage performing...

Clay: Oh that's my best.

Suzanne: I was gonna say. So you don't have to find a way to lean or sit on something?

Clay: No, it seems like, you know. I actually have better physical ability and range of motion when I walk off the stage then I do walking on stage. And hot showers, I love them. Cold it's the exact opposite for me. But I guess, that's why MS is so special because it does affect a lot of us in different ways. But I've heard from most people heat, affects them drastically.

Kate: I love the fact that you call MS special.

Clay: Well it is... (Interrupts, laughs)

Kate: Now we're going to go to Fran.

Fran: I thank you for all your efforts that you're doing for us, it's really really special. Are there any types of food that are more beneficial, that can improve your cognitive ability? I know addressed Omega 3 but is there anything you can introduce into diet that might help as well?

Dr. Kalb: I don't think that we know of anything that can improve cognition, I think that may be a very personal thing for you, certainly we like the diets that have a lot of fish in them, have the Omega 3 fatty acids, but I don't think we have an answer to brain food, which we all need, but I don't think there is an answer yet.

Fran: I am also riding the MS 150 this year and I also did it three years ago, which was 35 years was the last time I have been on a bike, but I'm going to ride on the tandem and am so delighted.

Clay: Did you say 35 years ago, wow!

Fran: And now I'm back on a bike

Kate: Good for you congratulations.

Fran: So don't limit yourself, I really appreciate you saying that, because we can do more than we think can and...

Clay: Yes, I agree with you, I agree with you.

Fran: Thank you.

Kate: Dr. Kalb, can you summarize some tips for maintaining good health for the audience?

Dr. Kalb: Sure I think for all of us with or with out MS we really we want to maximize our health with a healthy diet, exercise that is enjoyable and fun, activities that are meaningful, paying attention to our mood, because mood can really be affected in MS do we need to make sure we pay

attention to that and take care of that emotional part of our selves as well. And I think to echo what been said there are not a lot boundaries around you that you can explore and explore and push by tapping the resources, talking your doctor, getting educated and doing all the things you can to eat right, exercise and manage your stresses.

Kate: And seek inspiration.

We have two more programs in our special series with Clay Walker. In our future programs we'll talk about emotional health and fitting MS into our daily lives.

We want to thank Clay Walker for taking time to talk to us today and Dr. Rosalind Kalb for sharing her thoughts and expertise.

And thanks to our fantastic studio audience and to all of you who e-mailed your questions.

And finally, a special thanks goes to Teva Neuroscience for their charitable contribution which has made this special presentation of *MS Learn Online* possible.

Now make sure you check out parts two and three of our special Learn Online series with Clay Walker. Just click on the program titles to the right of the screen. See you then!