

Here are a few contacts to help you find out more about living with MS and talk to others who live with it:

[www.msactivesource.co.uk](http://www.msactivesource.co.uk)

[www.msactivesource.ie](http://www.msactivesource.ie)

[www.msdecisions.org.uk](http://www.msdecisions.org.uk)

The following organisations are also available to help:

Multiple Sclerosis Society  
[www.mssociety.org.uk](http://www.mssociety.org.uk)  
Helpline: 0808 800 8000  
email: [helpline@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:helpline@mssociety.org.uk)

Multiple Sclerosis Trust  
[www.mstrust.org.uk](http://www.mstrust.org.uk)  
Tel: 01462 476700  
email: [info@mstrust.org.uk](mailto:info@mstrust.org.uk)

Irish Multiple Sclerosis Society  
[www.ms-society.ie](http://www.ms-society.ie)  
Helpline: 1850 233233  
email: [mshelpline@ms-society.ie](mailto:mshelpline@ms-society.ie)

# The diagnosis process



Supporting you  
each step of the way

# The diagnosis process

## How is MS diagnosed?

Diagnosing MS isn't always straightforward and therefore can sometimes take time. Your doctor will need to make sure that you don't have another condition that shares similar symptoms.

If you visit your GP with neurological symptoms (symptoms of the central nervous system) that cannot be explained, they should refer you to see a neurologist for assessment.

In order to make a diagnosis your neurologist will carry out some tests. There isn't one single test that can tell whether you have MS but the main ones are as follows:

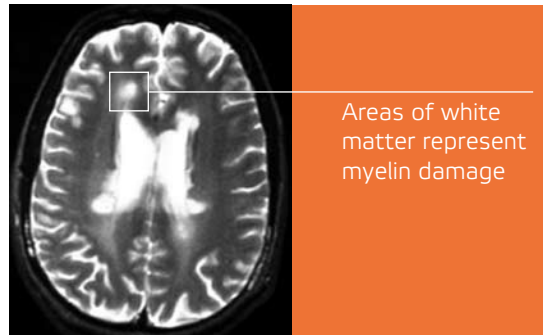
## Neurological examination

A physical examination that looks at your movements, reflexes and your sensory abilities, e.g. your eyesight, to see if you have any symptoms typical of MS.

## Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

This is a type of scan that uses magnetic fields to produce an image of the brain and spinal cord. It is the most popular kind of test used to diagnose neurological conditions.

An MRI scan shows the damage to myelin (the nerve covering) in the central nervous system that has been caused by MS.



Having a scan can be anxiety-provoking, especially if you are claustrophobic. However your doctor may prescribe you anti-anxiety medication to help with this. Ask your nurse for some more information about the process of having an MRI.

## Evoked potentials

These tests measure your reactions to different stimuli e.g. flashing lights, moving patterns and clicking noises. They look at how quickly electrical signals travel between the brain, eye, ear and skin. Small electrodes are taped to the scalp to do this. In patients with MS, the electrical signals are slower.

## Spinal fluid examination (Spinal tap or lumbar puncture)

This test is not used as often as the others but may be used if a diagnosis of MS hasn't been confirmed by other tests.

A sample of spinal (cerebrospinal) fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord is taken. This fluid can show signs of the damage to the central nervous system that has been caused by MS.