

If you have any further queries about early treatment, there are some useful sources of information below:

[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)



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biogen idec™

Thinking about early treatment

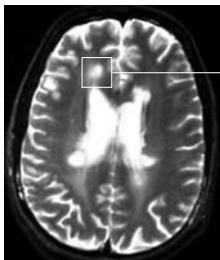


Supporting you  
each step of the way

# Why start treatment if you generally feel well?

In the early stages, MS typically comes and goes in a series of attacks that may be months or even years apart. So it's understandable that if you are between attacks and generally feeling quite well that you should question the need for starting therapy. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that waiting to see how it goes before starting therapy may not be the best approach.

Experts now know that damage to the nerves and brain actually begins very early on in the disease process – long before you are even diagnosed in fact. When nerve fibres are destroyed, the electrical signals between nerve cells and, for example, your muscles are interrupted. Although the damage is permanent and may be clearly visible on an MRI scan, it may be some time before you start to get symptoms. So, even if you have only just been diagnosed with MS, you may have had the condition for some time without realising that any harm was being done.



Areas of white matter represent myelin damage

## ■ What are the benefits of early treatment?

The main benefit of catching the disease early is that effective treatment with a disease modifying therapy (DMT) can bring about a change in the

course of MS. It can limit the damage to your nervous system, slowing the advance of MS and so delay disability and reduce future relapses.

## ■ How early is early?

Normally, to be diagnosed with MS a person has to have suffered two separate attacks that are at least a month apart. But there is a group of people who after just one attack are at very high risk of having another and developing MS. Doctors can identify these people from their MRI scans and clinical presentation. Studies have shown that DMTs may help to prevent these high-risk people from having a second attack.

Naturally, if you have only suffered one event, it can be a difficult decision to undergo treatment that has potential side effects. So it is an option that you need to talk to your neurologist about and carefully consider.

## ■ How effective are DMTs in the long term?

Disease-modifying therapies (DMTs) may not be a cure, but they can help slow the rate at which your MS progresses. Taken by injection, they have been shown to reduce both the number and severity of relapses you experience by about 30%. If you decide to take a DMT, it is important that you continue treatment over the long term, or until your doctor says otherwise, to help you get the most out of your treatment.