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## MS News!

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada estimates that between 55,000 and 75,000 Canadians have Multiple Sclerosis. Here's an update on some of the latest treatments.

Vitamin D is certainly the star of the moment, but some of the hype appears justified. New research is supporting the correlation of low vitamin D levels with the progression of Multiple Sclerosis. It remains unclear whether vitamin D supplementation can alter, or even prevent, the development of MS, but several studies are now underway to look at this question.

### Weight and MS

It's important to understand as much as possible about chronic and incurable conditions, such as Multiple Sclerosis, as this can lead to novel therapies or prevention. With MS, it has now been shown that those who are obese at age 20 have twice the risk of developing MS later in life. Treatments can be aimed at reducing the damaging inflammation due to leptin (which comes with obesity) and prevention via weight management.

### Yoga has Positive Impact

A pilot study out of Dallas is already demonstrating the benefits of yoga for managing Multiple Sclerosis. A specifically designed program lead to improvements in walking ability, balance, fatigue, and general health status, and even seemed to help control inflammation. The benefits were seen in as little as 8 weeks, with two 90-minute sessions per week. It looks like yoga could form a reasonable part of MS management!

### New Drug Treatment

A new drug for treating Multiple Sclerosis is making its way onto the market: dimethyl fumarate (Tecfidera). It is gaining approval as a first-line treatment of the relapsing-remitting form of MS and appears to be well-tolerated with side-effects such as flushing and gastro-intestinal symptoms, which generally subside over the first month. It also requires monitoring of liver and kidney function as well as blood counts.

Multiple Sclerosis is a progressive condition due to damage of the myelin sheath of nerve fibres that leads to numbness and loss of motor function. While there is no cure, your pharmacist can advise about management and lifestyle changes.