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Multiple Sclerosis Updates

There are about 100,000 Canadians living with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) according to the MS Society of Canada. Multiple Sclerosis is a condition where the insulating myelin sheath coating nerve fibres degenerates, leading to numbness, weakness and impaired coordination. The cause isn't completely understood and there is no cure. Clinical trials are currently underway using stem cell implants and the results are promising. Three years in, most patients are enjoying a sustained remission of symptoms with minimal side effects. Fingers crossed!

Salt and Relapses?

MS tends to remit and relapse, particularly in the early stages of the disease. Much research is devoted to getting a better understanding of the condition. A small study out of Argentina has found that high sodium (salt) intake can increase the risk of relapse about 3-fold. The high sodium quantity was about 4 grams per day – about double what the WHO recommends but not an uncommon quantity in many diets. All the more reason to keep salt intake down!

Obesity and MS Link?

The struggle to better understand MS has researchers examining the role of diet in the risk of developing MS. A major prospective study from Boston found no relationship between diet quality and MS risk... in adults! However, it has been noted that obesity in adolescence has been linked to a strong risk of developing MS. Finally, while adult diet has not been linked to MS specifically, it does improve overall health and ability to cope with MS symptoms.

Does Coffee Provide Benefit?

Two large studies – one from Sweden and one from the US – have found that coffee may reduce the risk for developing MS. Coffee has already shown advantages in both Parkinson's Disease and Alzheimer's Disease, so it is not a great stretch to guess that it's brain protective effects could extend to MS. The amount of coffee involved? Four to six cups per day – over 5-10 years. Yum!

It's always a treat to find that something you like might actually be good for you, but it's important to realize that research reports are not always definitive. The rule of thumb? Moderation is key!