

# Getting The **Balance Right**

A nationwide exercise-based, health-promotion and research programme for people with Multiple Sclerosis



*This programme was made possible by the support of these organisations:*





## OVERVIEW OF GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT PROGRAMME

Getting the Balance Right is a nationwide exercise, health-promotion and research programme for people with MS. It will be delivered across the country in a variety of venues and settings. This project will offer a range of opportunities to people with MS to maintain and improve a full range of motions, which may have been impacted on as a result of the MS disease process.

The programme, the first of its kind for the Society, is primarily an opportunity for people with MS to participate in a monitored and guided physiotherapy programme, with greater frequency. It is also an opportunity for MS Ireland to profile the physical needs of its members and learn more about the impact of a range of exercises and therapies on people with MS.

## MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

MS is a degenerative, neurological condition of the central nervous system. It can affect the motor, sensory and cognitive functioning of the body. The presence, severity and duration of symptoms differ from person to person. However, common symptoms include fatigue, visual disturbances, lack of co-ordination/mobility and altered feelings in the arms or legs.

A number of studies have looked at the benefits of physiotherapy and exercise-related activities for people with MS.

The literature suggests that a range of exercise programmes with wide-ranging durations and intensities all have positive effects on the functional abilities and participation levels of people with chronic diseases. Rates of participation in regular exercise are lower in people with MS, however [Motl et al, 2005].

MS Ireland conducted research among its members in 2006 [Lansdowne Market Research]. The findings clearly highlighted that physiotherapy and exercise-related programmes were the top priority in terms of services required and are not widely available either through the Health Service Executive or from MS Ireland, due to the current level of resources.

## BENEFITS OF TAKING PART

There is a range of benefits people with MS can experience by taking part in the programme:

- Range of movement can be maintained and/or increased
- Fatigue can be reduced
- Exercise and techniques can be adapted to suit the person's lifestyle, allowing him or her to continue the tailored exercise plan
- Assistance can be given to carers and family members to help them better understand MS and support the person through the programme
- Tips and techniques can be learned to promote a healthier lifestyle and a greater sense of well-being.

## HOW THE PROGRAMME WORKS

The main feature of Getting The Balance Right is access to an assessment by a chartered physiotherapist and a tailor-made exercise programme. Participants can take part in either the exercise-related parts of the programme — without consenting for their information to be used for the research — or they can participate in the research programme. MS Ireland encourages all people with MS to take part, regardless of membership to the Society.

## THE EXERCISE PROGRAMME

The programme is open to anyone with MS, regardless of their range of motion. As there is such variety in the types of programmes, there is something to suit all abilities.

**Step 1:** Register your interest with your local Regional Office (see overleaf for details)

**Step 2:** The Regional Office will arrange for a chartered physiotherapist to conduct an assessment with you. This will allow you and the physiotherapist to choose the best programme for your needs

**Step 3:** You will be facilitated in participating in an exercise-related programme based on the outcome of your assessment with the physiotherapist

**Step 4:** Enjoy an exercise-based programme most suited to your needs.

### TYPES OF PROGRAMMES CAN INCLUDE:

- Group or one-to-one physiotherapy
- Fitness instructor-led gym sessions
- Yoga, tai chi or other gentle exercise
- Aqua aerobics

Each programme will be run by a trained professional who will be aware of each participant's needs. Programmes will be held in various venues across each county, depending on the needs of those in the area and the suitability of the facilities available.

## THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

In addition to the exercise part of the programme, participants can also take part in the research programme. Those who wish to take part in the research will participate in the exercise programme as described above. However, research participants will be monitored by a physiotherapist throughout the 12 weeks to evaluate the benefit of the programme. Quality-of-life issues, endurance, muscle tone, balance and fatigue will be measured using standardised measurements.

For medical reasons, such as pregnancy or exacerbation of symptoms due to relapse, some people may be unable to take part in the research part of the programme. This does not exclude you from accessing an assessment by a chartered physiotherapist.

This research element of the programme will inform MS Ireland in terms of service delivery in the area of physiotherapy and exercise. It will also provide us with much-needed evidence to influence government policy in relation to the direction and development of exercise-based therapeutic interventions for people with MS.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

To register your interest in the programme, contact your local Regional Office:

Region	Counties/Areas Covered	Contact Details
Eastern Region, South West Area	Kildare, South-west Dublin (including Terenure, Tallaght, Clondalkin, Chapelizod, Lucan, Rathcoole)	01 2569585 swa@ms-society.ie
Eastern Region, East Coast Area	Wicklow, East-coast Dublin (including Ballinteer, Kilternan, Monkstown, Killiney, Shankill)	01 2866800 eca@ms-society.ie
Eastern Region, Northern Area	North Dublin city and county (including Fairview, Cabra, Coolock, Malahide, Finglas, Lusk, Balbriggan, Naul)	01 2569585 na@ms-society.ie
South-East Region	Wexford, Waterford, Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary	056 7751522 southeast@ms-society.ie
Southern Region	Cork and Kerry	021 4300001 southern@ms-society.ie
Mid-West Region	Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary	061 335565 midwest@ms-society.ie
Midlands Region	Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath	090 6476353 midlands@ms-society.ie
North-East Region	Cavan, Monaghan, Meath, Louth	042 9664410 northeast@ms-society.ie
Western	Galway, Roscommon and Mayo	091 862478 western@ms-society.ie
North West	Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim	074 9125017 northwest@ms-society.ie

## MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the programme, check out our website at [www.ms-society.ie/gettingthebalanceright](http://www.ms-society.ie/gettingthebalanceright) or call Aidan Larkin, National Co-ordinator on 091 862478.

## MS IRELAND

MS Ireland is the national organisation supporting and providing services for people and families living with MS. The Society provides a wide range of services and programmes designed specifically to meet the needs of the MS community.

- 10 professionally staffed Regional Offices
- 'Living with MS' programmes, activities and workshops
- Confidential helpline, 1850 233 233
- Respite Care Centre
- 41 Voluntary Branches, nationwide
- Professional counselling
- Advocacy and lobbying
- Publications and fact sheets
- *MSnews* magazine and e-newsletter
- Website: [www.ms-society.ie](http://www.ms-society.ie)
- Information and research
- National conferences

If you would like to join MS Ireland, or to learn more about our services, contact your local Regional Office or our National Office on the numbers below.

**Multiple Sclerosis Ireland, 80 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4**

**Telephone:** 01 6781600 • **Email:** [info@ms-society.ie](mailto:info@ms-society.ie) • **Helpline:** 1850 233 233 • **Web:** [www.ms-society.ie](http://www.ms-society.ie)