

# Intimacy & MS

Multiple sclerosis may make romance a bit more challenging, but Colorado experts tout the importance of remaining close and connected.

When Fort Collins resident Jennifer Moore was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) last year, the news was nothing short of shocking.

MS is an autoimmune disease that attacks the central nervous system, affecting women an alarming 73 percent of the time. Symptoms range from fatigue and numbness in the face and limbs to disturbances with balance, bowel and bladder functions.

For women diagnosed with the disease, intimacy issues with their partners may arise unexpectedly, including decreased sensitivity during intercourse. Moore says talking to her partner about various intimate issues is sometimes difficult, and timing the discussion is crucial.

“It’s important to have conversations outside of sexual intimacy,” Moore says. She reserves talk time during downtime or while sharing outdoor activities together.

Some women experience decreased sexual desire because of hormonal shifts or because of the body’s “physical deficits,” says Dr. Tamara Ann Miller, a neurologist at Advanced Neurology of Colorado. Spasticity in the legs can also make spontaneity with a partner a bit challenging, causing



the legs to close together at times.

“In my practice, I inject Botox in the legs to try to loosen them up,” Miller says.

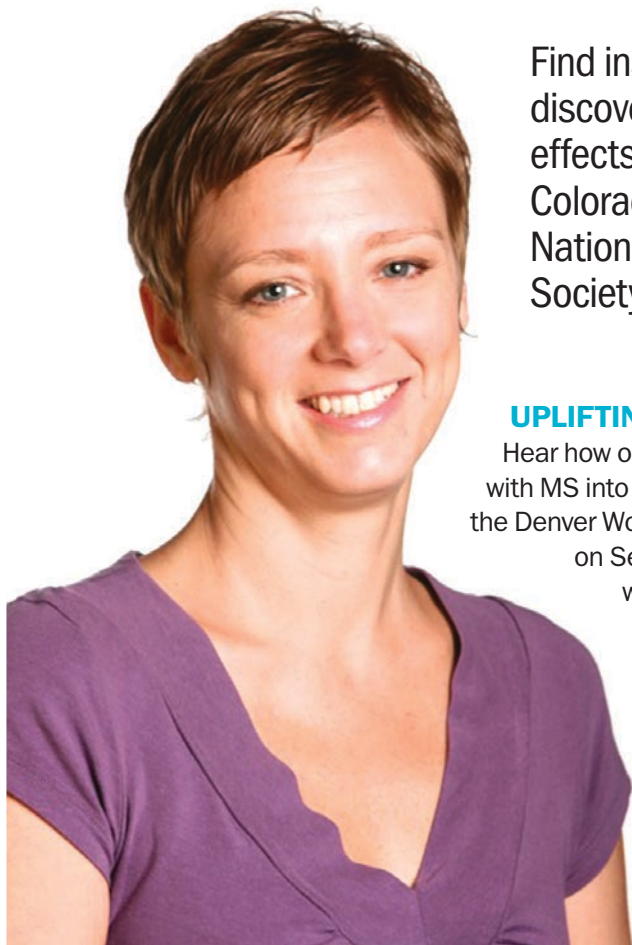
Decreased energy can wreck havoc on intimacy too. Drug therapies can help. Doctors prescribe off-label drugs such as Provigil or Nuvigil, to minimize fatigue, Miller says. Napping can be helpful in keeping up your energy.

When registered nurse Pat

Kennedy teaches intimacy classes to women with MS, she encourages them to refuel with “me” time. That might be reading a book, scheduling a manicure or seeing a movie solo.

“The more a woman can be good to herself, it separates her from MS,” Kennedy says. “It builds a buffer from MS and that gives her more of herself to give to her partner.”

# Get Involved



Find inspiration or discover more about the effects of MS at these Colorado Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society events.

## UPLIFTING MESSAGE

Hear how one woman turned her battle with MS into a global giving movement at the Denver Women on the Move luncheon on Sept. 14. The keynote speaker will be Cami Walker, author of the *New York Times* best seller *29 Gifts: How a Month of Giving Can Change Your Life*. Walker will explain how giving a gift to someone each day for 29 days changed her life. For more information, visit [cureMScolorado.org](http://cureMScolorado.org).



## DIAL IN

Learn about the social, emotional and medical impact of MS from the comfort of your own home during the Summer Teleconference Series. September's topics include Employment and MS and Intimacy and MS. For more information, call 800.344.4867 or visit [cureMScolorado.org](http://cureMScolorado.org).

## COLORADO RESEARCH

More than 9,500 Coloradans are diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS), which puts our state near the top of the nation for number of cases. Colorado is also a leader when it comes to MS research. Colorado is home to six clinical trials testing for MS drug safety and efficacy. To learn more about these clinical trials, call 800.344.4867.

## What daily activity can women with MS do to feel better?

**“Yoga. It’s very cathartic. It is a good way to get your heart going and stretch the muscles out.”** —Jennifer Moore, MS patient, Fort Collins

**“Spend some time every day in an MS-free zone, a place where you can go mentally to be away from MS.”** —Pat Kennedy, RN, CN, MSCN, Morrison