

Partner to Prevent MS: Canada's opportunity to lead

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a lifelong neurological disease that often begins early in adulthood. **For the first time, science shows us that preventing MS is within reach.** With one of the highest MS rates in the world and decades of excellence in research and care, Canada is well positioned to act during this early window.



Key Action:

A federal investment of \$15 million, in partnership with MS Canada, will support prevention-focused MS research to improve the long-term health of Canadians through earlier detection and earlier intervention, and strengthen Canada's leadership in science and innovation.



Why MS? *The Impact on Canadians*

Approximately 12 Canadians are diagnosed with MS every day – many as they are just beginning their careers, families, and full participation in society. MS is unpredictable, episodic and progressive, and has an immense impact on the day-to-day lives of Canadians, their families, and communities.

A major scientific advancement has been the identification of the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) as a required trigger for MS. This discovery has shifted the focus to the earliest stage of MS risk – making prevention a scientifically credible goal by enabling intervention before irreversible damage occurs.

While MS remains a serious and life altering disease, it is also one of the most deeply studied conditions in brain health. Progress in MS research has revealed fundamental insights into how the immune system interacts with the brain – knowledge now shaping research in Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and post-viral conditions such as long COVID.

Time matters in MS. The disease often begins years before symptoms appear – **prevention is the opportunity to stop MS to maintain health, independence, and time** – and Canada can help lead that shift.



Why Canada?



Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world, with more than 90,000 Canadians living with MS. Annual health system costs and productivity losses are estimated at \$3.4 billion, not including the broader socioeconomic impacts of MS on families, unpaid caregiving, and long-term participation in work and society.

Canada is home to world leading MS researchers and clinicians, supported by a strong pipeline of trainees and early career investigators. Through sustained investment over decades, MS Canada has helped build the talent, infrastructure, and collaborative networks that position Canada at the forefront of MS research globally.

MS Canada has been the largest non-government funder of MS research in the country since its founding more than 75 years ago. Currently, MS Canada is supporting 108 research initiatives, totaling more than \$34 million in funding, including 11 research studies to prevent MS and 59 research studies to understand and halt disease progression.

As MS research funding in the United States becomes more constrained, Canada has a timely opportunity – and responsibility – to lead by sustaining its world-class research talent here, so that discovery and prevention efforts deliver impact where the need is greatest.



Why now? *Prevention as a Rare Opportunity*

Long before prevention became a focus of global attention, MS Canada made a deliberate decision to invest in understanding risk, early disease, and windows for intervention. That sustained commitment – even when prevention represented only 6% of global MS research funding – has helped position the field at the threshold of meaningful breakthroughs.

Today, Canadian researchers are well placed to help translate this global momentum into impact. In April 2025, MS Canada and MS Australia brought together 60 diverse experts in Lisbon, Portugal, to discuss current knowledge and priorities for MS prevention. The recommendations from the workshop, published in the *Multiple Sclerosis Journal*, set the stage for an internationally aligned prevention agenda for MS.

The Global MS Prevention Initiative, co-led by MS Canada and MS Australia, will align international funding and research capacity to close critical knowledge gaps in MS prevention. MS Canada is contributing \$5 million, MS Australia \$2.5 million, and the Government of Australia has pledged \$18 million for MS prevention research – creating a unique opportunity to accelerate progress at a pivotal moment.

Through the Global MS Prevention Initiative, Canada will play a central role in shaping, coordinating, and accelerating a globally aligned prevention research effort – helping ensure that emerging knowledge is translated into meaningful, timely impact for people affected by MS in Canada and worldwide.

Why Partner to Prevent MS?

Investing in MS research is not just a health imperative — it's an economic one. MS begins early and unfolds over decades, making prevention a powerful way to reduce long-term impacts on health, participation, and health-care systems. Partnering to prevent MS is how this long-term value is realized for Canada.