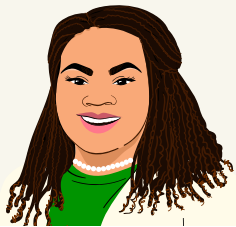




# The Black MS Experience: 5 Tips for MS Care



“The truth is, **the Black MS experience is unique** so it’s important to advocate for yourself.” Dr. Mitzi Joi Williams, neurologist and MS specialist, shares advice on being an active participant in your healthcare journey.



## TIP #1 Find a doctor you trust

If you aren’t getting what you need, it’s okay to seek a second or third opinion until you find a doctor who you connect with and listens to you. Consider this a partnership.

## TIP #2 Keep track of symptoms

All symptoms are important to pay attention to, whether they are visible or not, especially because Black people are at risk of experiencing more severe symptoms than other patient populations. Start a health journal so you can document any changes in symptoms you might experience day-to-day and proactively share updates with your healthcare provider. The more we know, the better we can help take care of you.

## TIP #3 Prioritize your treatment

Work with your healthcare provider to find a disease-modifying treatment (DMT) that works for you ASAP. Why? MS is a progressive disease from the start, and the Black MS community tends to have faster disability progression than your White counterparts.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Starting on a high-efficacy DMT early may help delay that progression.<sup>4</sup>

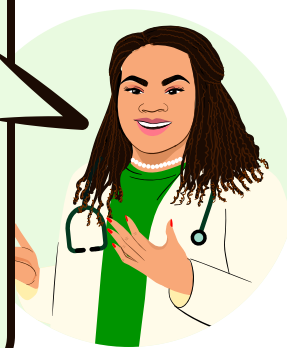
## TIP #4 Don’t be afraid to ask questions

Do you have questions? Don’t be afraid to speak up and get the clarity you need to live your best life with MS. Write down your questions when you think of them, or use a voice memo on your smartphone, so you have a list that you and your doctor can go through together at your next appointment.

## TIP #5 Connect with the MS community

You’re not alone. There’s a community out there to support you through all stages of your MS journey. Find your support network by reaching out to advocacy organizations or connecting with others online.

*“How can you become an empowered patient? By actively participating in decisions and actions related to your health, especially when it comes to your MS diagnosis and treatment plan. Take advantage of the available tools and resources (like this tip sheet!) that can help guide you in your MS journey. You’re not alone.”*



**Be sure to print, save and share these tips with others in the MS community!**

<sup>1</sup>National MS Society. “Who Gets MS? - MS in the Black Community.” January 2023.

<sup>2</sup>*Mult Scler J Exp Transl Clin.* “MS in self-identified Hispanic/Latino individuals living in the US.” Sep. 25, 2017.

<sup>3</sup>*UT Health.* “Research shows race is a factor in disparities of symptom prevalence and response to treatment in multiple sclerosis treatment.”

<sup>4</sup>*Lancet.* “Timing of high-efficacy therapy for multiple sclerosis: a retrospective observational cohort study.” April 2020.