

Living with Migraine and Getting Support



Living with migraine can be tough. You will need a good support system, and lots of planning to make sure you can manage your migraine effectively and continue to do everything you want to do in life.

Living with migraine is difficult, and dealing with stigma from the community can be disheartening. Migraine Australia is working to provide awareness, support and advocacy to those living with migraine.

Find your care team

Managing migraine involves a lot more than a GP and a few pills. It is a complex disease, and you need to manage all aspects of it. You should consider the following for your care team (if appropriate to your needs):

GP – Your general practitioner is the person you may see most frequently. Your GP will organise your referrals, Chronic Disease Management Plan, monitor your condition and write prescriptions for you.

Neurologist – A neurologist is a specialist doctor who diagnoses and treats conditions of the brain, spinal cord and nerves. When starting the journey to see a neurologist, you can check the Australian and New Zealand Headache Society website for their list of Headache specialists – these are doctors who specialise in headache disorders, migraine is classified under this speciality. A neurologist can assist in treating your migraine if you are not responding to treatments offered by your GP, you will also need to see a neurologist if you are prescribed CGRP antagonists.

Psychologist – Like many other chronic conditions, migraine is associated with anxiety and depression. In addition, the impact of migraine on your life may further exacerbate underlying mental health conditions. Having a psychologist in your care team can provide you with strategies to assist with your mental health, or give you a person to talk to without judgement.

Pharmacist – They can monitor your medication use, raise a red flag if any of your medications clash, and suggest over the counter medications that may assist.

Your primary carer – This may be a spouse, parent, good friend, or other loved one. This may be the person you put down as your emergency contact. Talk to them about what is happening with your condition, what your treatment plan is and how they can help if you're in migraine crisis. It may be beneficial to have this information written down for easy access.

Find your people

Migraine Australia runs both national and local area support groups on Facebook. Join the groups that are right for you and connect with thousands of others who get it.

Search for us on Facebook or find a full list of groups at www.migraine.org.au/warriornetwork



Other practitioners you may want to add to your care team

Allied Health Practitioners – Allied Health may be a beneficial addition to your team, this may include physiotherapy, acupuncture, osteopathy, myotherapy or chiropractic care. A physiotherapist may be an important member of the care team for anyone with migraine affecting their balance or movement.

Dietician – Having a practitioner who specialises in diet and nutrition may assist you in finding foods that are beneficial to you, and foods that you may need to avoid when your migraine threshold is low. A dietitian can also help you identify any intolerances you may have, and also assist you with nutrient deficiencies.

Other specialists – If you see specialists for other health issues, keep them informed of your current medications, and how your health is affecting you.

Migraine is a disability, and you are entitled to disability supports. Ask what services and supports are available in your local area, or at your school, university, or workplace.

Fighting migraine stigma

Managing migraine can also come with managing stigma and raising awareness that migraine is more than just a headache. Here are some tips on how you may choose to do this:

- Talk it up, not down: be clear and direct that you live with migraine, and these are the things you need to do to manage it. Specifying your subtype, or saying 'a complicated form of migraine' can help to distinguish it in the minds of others as not being 'a headache.'
- Participate in events like Migraine Awareness Month held in June each year. It is a good opportunity to talk about your migraine openly.
- Have a written management plan: documentation is really helpful in signalling the importance of your condition to managers. Write down what your condition involves and what you need to manage it. Register for any disability support programs in your school, university, or workplace. Your doctor can provide you with letters of support too.



This fact sheet was clinically reviewed by Dr Lakshini Gunasekera (BBMed, MD, FRACP)