

SOCIAL WELLNESS

Migraine can affect your relationships with family, friends, and coworkers, but a strong social support network can also help you maintain a high quality of life.



Talking about migraine can be difficult

Migraine disease is often misunderstood or dismissed by people who don't fully understand its impact. People with migraine may experience **stigma**, which can cause additional negative mental or physical health symptoms.

You have the power to decide how you address concerns about stigma. Some people prefer to keep their migraine symptoms private, while others address stigma by sharing about their migraine attacks and advocating for change.

If you wish to discuss your experience, try creating your “migraine elevator speech” to introduce your friends to migraine disease in a way that destigmatizes your symptoms. Learn more about advocacy in the **intellectual wellness section** of this toolkit.



How to talk about migraine with friends and family:

- Consider the benefits and risks of sharing. For example, sharing may help you find great sources of social support, but it may also leave you responding to a great deal of unsolicited advice. Think about sharing carefully, and make a decision that feels good to you.
- Talk to loved ones about migraine when you are not in pain. This will make the conversation easier for you and them. It may be helpful to share how you are doing, what symptoms you experience, and how they can help you better cope with migraine.
- Encourage them to ask questions and share concerns. Helping them to learn about migraine will help you to both feel empowered.
- Concentrate on your language choices. Let them know how you feel, but avoid placing blame or disappointment on others. If conversation becomes too hard, table it and return to the topic another time.

See our appendices for tips on how to talk to a loved one dealing with migraine.

SOCIAL WELLNESS (CONT.)

What about unsolicited advice?

Unfortunately, many people with migraine or other chronic health conditions are used to hearing advice from others about how best to handle their symptoms. Sometimes this advice may be helpful, but it may also be frustrating to hear. Take what works, and feel free to leave the rest.



SAMPLE SCRIPT

Thank you so much for caring. I have a pretty specific treatment plan with my doctor, so I try to stick to that carefully.

Sometimes you may need to decline invitations or leave an event early to prevent an attack or avoid making symptoms worse. Saying “no” can be a good choice for your health and wellness in these scenarios, even if it’s difficult.



SAMPLE SCRIPT

I’m so sorry I have to miss this. I wish I could be there. I’d love to take you out for a cup of tea next week so I can hear all about it.

How to talk about migraine with children:

- Children are likely to be more fearful than adults. They may worry migraine disease could kill you, that migraine is contagious, or that they cause you to have migraine attacks when they misbehave. Normalizing their concerns while providing age-appropriate information can go a long way to ease their fears.
- Plan for what to do the next time you are not feeling well. Giving children an important task — anything from bringing a glass of water to assisting with chores — can help them to feel involved and productive, instead of worried or upset.
- When migraine attacks cause you to cancel plans, work together to find an alternative. It is helpful to teach children how to set boundaries and say “no” when you are under the weather, but giving them an alternative to canceled plans will also give them something to look forward to.



SAMPLE SCRIPT

I’m sorry I’m not feeling well. It can be a little scary to see your Mom under the weather, but I will feel better once I get some rest and quiet time. I’m disappointed that we can’t go to the movies today, but let’s plan to go to the park tomorrow instead. In the meantime, I’d love it if you could grab a glass of water for me and then you can watch your favorite movie while I rest.