

# Hosting a Migraine Support Group

Starting a migraine support group can give you and others living with migraine an important network of people who understand what you're going through. Those with migraine often report feeling alone, making a support group a great way to combat isolation while making friends and sharing resources in a judgment-free zone.

## Benefits of Joining a Migraine Support Group

- Make friends who understand your disease
- Open up about the difficulties you face
- Practice coping skills
- Learn about new management strategies
- Ask for advice



## How to Host a Migraine Support Group

### Step 1. Find members.

To find members for your group, start by speaking with your friends, family and coworkers to see if they are interested or if they know anyone else who would be. If you're open to expanding membership outside of people you know, you could post a flyer in your community spots such as a community center, library or online neighborhood page.

### Step 2. Decide on logistics.

In-person meetings should take place at a centralized location for accessibility. This could be a local coffee shop or rotate from one member's house to another. When considering locations, beware of obvious migraine triggers. While there are benefits to in-person meetings, phone calls or conference calls can account for the unpredictable nature of attacks.

### Step 3. Set ground rules.

The purpose of your group should be to provide support, so ground rules help to keep the conversation productive and the atmosphere friendly. Below are some of rules that you may wish to utilize:

- Respect every person's privacy - What members discuss in the group should stay in the group.
- Behave politely at all times - Members should be polite, thoughtful and empathetic of what others are going through to ensure everyone feels welcome.
- No solicitations - The purpose of the group is to support each other.
- Do not give medical advice or diagnose - This is a patient support group, not a doctor's office. Members should share stories of what worked for them instead of telling a person what to do.
- Share verified information - There is a lot of information available on the internet, but not all of it is vetted by medical professionals. The group can agree to refer to the [American Migraine Foundation's Resource Library](#) or another doctor-verified source to answer any questions.




## Step 4. Meet up.

In this step, you can be as creative as you want to be.

**Before** - Prepare to host the group by outlining the topic you wish to speak about. This involves researching the topic and finding useful information to bring to the group. The [American Migraine Foundation resource library](#) of doctor-verified content is a great place to start. Consider sharing the topic before the group so members come prepared to discuss it.

**During** - Starting a meeting with an ice-breaker is a great way to get members warmed up and ready to participate in the conversation. Ice-breakers can range from easy (What's your favorite vacation destination?) or more thoughtful (Let's share highs and lows of the week.). After the ice-breaker, introduce the topic by stating the goal: "I want everyone to walk away from this meeting feeling/knowing/ etc..." Upon closing a meeting, remind members of any action items and the next group meeting.

**After** - Share the resources discussed during the meeting with the group to review or use in their free time.



### Sample Topics to Discuss

- How do you support a child with migraine?
- What advice would you give someone to best support a person with migraine?
- How do you excuse yourself when an attack catches you by surprise?
- Have you ever expressed your experience with migraine through art?
- How do you get involved with migraine advocacy?
- What was the process of finding a doctor or migraine specialist?
- What was a change you incorporated into your life that made a significant impact?

## Tips to a Successful Meeting



While planning a meeting a few weeks will give people time to adjust their calendars, migraine attacks don't check calendars. Stay flexible with members or offer the option to call into meetings. Health is more important than attendance.



Respect group members' time by being punctual and ending the meeting on time. If people wish to stay after and discuss further, make sure that it's okay with the hosting location.



Snacks and drinks are important in any group, but they are especially important in a migraine support group. Stabilize blood sugar and stay hydrated by offering snacks or inviting members to bring their own.



The mission of the American Migraine Foundation is to mobilize a community for patient support and advocacy, as well as drive and support impactful research that translates into advances for patients with migraine and other disabling diseases that cause severe head pain. Visit [americanmigrainefoundation.org](http://americanmigrainefoundation.org) for more resources for people living with migraine and their supporters.

### American Migraine Foundation

19 Mantua Rd. Mount Royal, NJ 08061 || P: 856.423.0043 || E: [amf@talley.com](mailto:amf@talley.com)