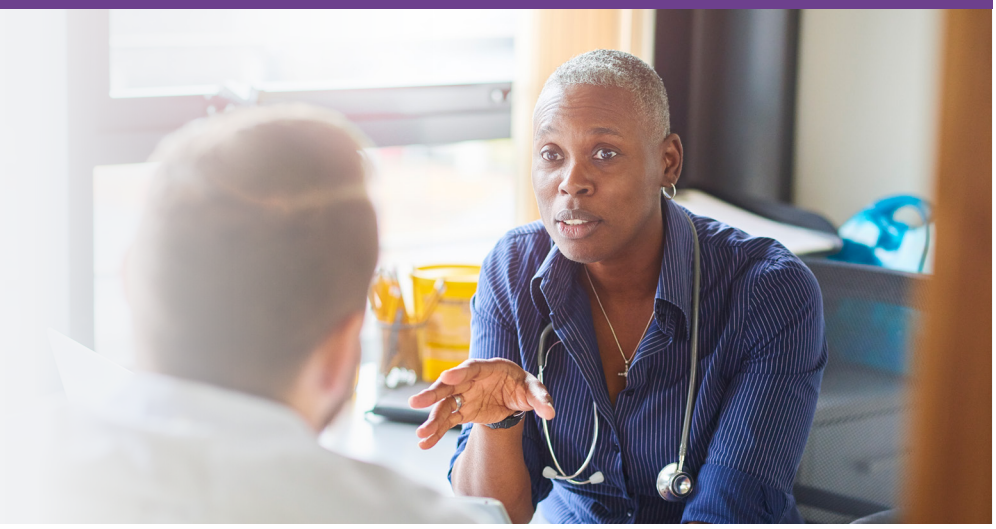
AMERICAN MIGRAINE FOUNDATION

What to Do After a Diagnosis

Understanding the impact of migraine



What is Migraine?

Migraine is a debilitating disease that impacts over 39 million people in the United States. The impact of migraine exists on a scale ranging from a minor and occasional nuisance to a disabling chronic disorder. Despite one in seven people around the world living with migraine, the disease is under-recognized, under-diagnosed and under-treated.

Impact of Migraine

People with migraine may experience severe headache, nausea, vision disturbances and sensitivity to light, sounds and odors among other symptoms. Outside of the physical symptoms of migraine, this disease can isolate people from their friends and family. People with migraine often have to miss social or family events or cannot be as present in their loved ones' lives as they would like to be. Disabling symptoms sometimes cause those with the disease to miss or fall behind at work and school.

"People with migraine may feel like life is passing them by. They miss out on work, social and family events, and they may feel that their friends, families and coworkers do not understand what they are going through."

— Dr. Dawn Buse, psychologist and researcher specializing in headache and pain at the Montefiore Medical Center and Professor of Neurology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Three Support Essentials

No one should have to go through migraine alone, so create a strong support system of individuals who will be there for you during the good, the bad and the migraine.

1. **Community.** Life with migraine can be isolating, so it is important to combat feelings of loneliness by connecting with others. You may find community in your friends, family and coworkers in addition to online or in-person support groups. You may need to educate the people in your life about migraine as there are many common misconceptions.

2. **Professional Help.** Your doctor is an important member of your support system. They should make you feel comfortable and heard and consider you a partner in your own health. Find a doctor or other healthcare professional to explore your unique treatment options.

3. **Self-Care.** Support yourself by caring for yourself. Self-care can take on many forms, so start with the basics: get enough sleep, eat a balanced diet, move your body and reduce your stress.

How to Explain Migraine

Talking about your health can be a deeply personal topic, so it can be difficult to find the words to describe what you're going through. Here are some helpful tips to navigate those tough conversations:

- **Make it educational.** Personal stories can go a long way in describing what life with migraine is like, but it also helps to back it up with cold, hard facts.
- **Practice your pitch.** Practicing how to speak about this disease in the mirror by yourself or with a loved one can help you feel confident when you have the conversation in other settings.
- **Tailor your message.** The information you share with a close friend may not make sense to talk about with family members, employers and coworkers, so vary how you approach the conversation depending on who you're speaking with.

"Getting help from your family, getting help from your colleagues, getting help medically and getting help in how you can cope with migraine is extremely important."

— Dr. Matthew Robbins, Associate Professor of Neurology and Neurology Residency Program Director at Weill Cornell

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 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