



MYASTHENIA GRAVIS
FOUNDATION OF AMERICA, INC.®

PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

FOR PATIENTS WITH MYASTHENIA GRAVIS

If someone you love is diagnosed with myasthenia gravis, you may feel desperate and completely helpless. But it doesn't have to be that way. Research has shown us that family and friends can play a huge role in helping patients deal with a chronic illness. When a person is suffering from myasthenia gravis, it's important that they feel truly cared about. What matters most is how people interact with the family member affected.

Common ways that you can help provide support include:

- **Availability:** Your willingness to be a part of your family's support system is invaluable towards their wellbeing. Patients with strong family support fair better, have less stress, and respond better to medications. Be available. Help them when they can't do things. Their needs can change from day-to-day, and week-to-week. Offer to perform specific tasks periodically, such as helping with child care, hair styling, shopping for groceries, and clothing, wrapping their presents, driving them to a doctor's appointment or taking them out of the house for a social excursion.
- **Knowledge:** Learn as much as you can about MG. Attend local MG meetings and support groups with your family member. Understanding what your family member is experiencing can help them tremendously. Symptom fluctuation is a hallmark of myasthenia gravis, but many family members cannot understand that a patient can be normal at one moment, and very weak at another. Understanding what myasthenia gravis is, and how it specifically affects your family is vital.
- **Listen:** MG affects everyone differently, and you need to listen to how it affects your family member. Many patients are angry or frustrated that they can no longer do what they used to do, and are often anxious about new symptoms arising. They can be dissatisfied with their personal appearance or feel self-conscious about their speech. Many patients need to make large lifestyle modifications which can leave them depressed and socially isolated. Interpersonal relationships may be strained as individuals cope with MG, and by listening and providing support you can provide significant help.
- **Empathy and concern** are vital to any patient suffering from chronic illness. This is about them, and you can help change their lives by caring.



MYASTHENIA GRAVIS
FOUNDATION OF AMERICA, INC.®

PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

FOR PATIENTS WITH MYASTHENIA GRAVIS

- Offering choices and alternatives to patients: Many patients with MG experience ups and downs, and they can often be unpredictable. This can often lead to social isolation and depression. In providing alternative plans and options so that your family member can be included, you can help transform their disease and combat the loneliness endemic to chronic disease.
- Continue to plan family activities together. Patient with MG need family and friends constantly, and opportunities for large social gatherings and events may be helpful in promoting socializations and building interpersonal relationships.
- Openly discuss the illness, and address issues regarding care and management. Patients respond better and do not feel alone when others are directly involved in their care.
- Seek professional counseling. When you feel that you cannot provide the support your family member needs please continue to help them by directing them towards professional counseling. All of us need need extra help at difficult periods in our lives.