

MYASTHENIA GRAVIS & OVERALL WELLNESS

# A HOLISTIC APPROACH

A Guide for Patients / Family Members / Caregivers



# HOLISTIC WELLNESS

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## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Holistic wellness is the ultimate state of wholeness that can be achieved by a human being. It is the physical, mental, spiritual, and practical utopia of the human experience.

Holistic medicine is the art and science of healing that addresses the whole person—**body, mind, and spirit.**

It integrates conventional and alternative therapies to prevent and treat disease, and most importantly, to promote optimal health...and includes all safe and appropriate modalities of diagnosis and treatment.

Holistic medicine focuses on patient education and encourages patient participation in the healing process.



# PHYSICAL WELLNESS

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## NUTRITION

While today's modern diet may provide beneficial protection from micro and macronutrient deficiencies, the overabundance of calories and the macronutrients that compose our diet may lead to increased inflammation, reduced control of infection, increased rates of cancer, and increased risk for allergic and auto-inflammatory disease.

### Contributors to Inflammation

Foods with simple, refined sugars and carbohydrates which include sweet desserts, breakfast cereals, white bread, white rice, and white flour are inflammation-causing culprits.

Saturated and trans fatty acids (trans fats) found in processed foods such as hot dogs, French fries, chips, soda, doughnuts, and candy also cause inflammation and increase risk factors for obesity (such as increased belly fat), diabetes and heart conditions.

### Inflammatory Foods



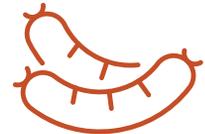
Fried foods



Sodas



Refined carbs



Processed meats





## Anti-Inflammatory Foods



Tomatoes



Fruits  
strawberries, blueberries,  
oranges and cherries



Nuts & Seeds  
walnuts, almonds, and other  
nuts and seeds



Olive oil



Leafy greens  
spinach, kale, collards, etc.



Fatty fish  
salmon, mackerel, tuna  
and sardines

## Fighting Inflammation

To help fight inflammation, individuals with MG should consider consuming foods rich in omega 3 fatty acids, such as fatty fish, nuts and seeds. It is also important to incorporate particular fruits, leafy greens and healthy fats due to their high levels of natural antioxidants and protective compounds that reduce inflammation.

## Chewing & MG Patients

Patients with MG can experience weakness in jaw muscles which makes it difficult to chew and can create a choking hazard.

To combat this, meals should be planned with the largest meal of the day occurring when an individual is experiencing the least muscle weakness. Making foods more soft and tender also helps with the challenges of chewing.

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## EXERCISE

A common belief is that exercise is a poor choice for individuals with MG since the repeated use of muscles can cause muscle weakness, exacerbating the condition.

For most people, regular exercise leads to increased muscular strength, endurance, and improved cardiorespiratory health. The same is actually true for individuals with MG.

Low impact exercises such as walking, swimming, and light jogging are best for patients with MG. While exercise can't reverse the body's autoimmune response, it will keep the body strong and reduce the chances of developing secondary health conditions which can complicate MG symptoms.

TO ENSURE SAFETY WHILE EXERCISING FOLLOW **PACE**:

**P**

Plan daily activities

**A**

Adapt the home  
Assistive equipment  
Ask for help

**C**

Conserve energy  
Cool temperature

**E**

Emotional stability  
Exercise in moderation  
Eliminate unnecessary daily tasks

## EXERCISE GUIDELINES

When engaging in exercise, individuals with MG must be cautious. You must consider the time of day in which you exercise, type of exercise, duration of exercise, and the environment in which you exercise.

- Exercise at the time of day when you have the most strength
- Exercise for short periods of time building up only to moderate intensity; mild to moderate levels are best
- Heart rate should not elevate greater than 30 bpm from resting baseline
- MG symptoms should not become worse during exercise (e.g., drooping of eyes)
- You should not be tired 2 hours after exercise, and you should not have severe residual muscle soreness day(s) later

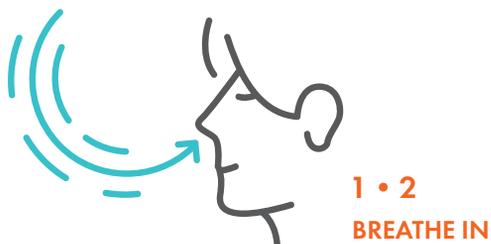


## BREATHING EXERCISES

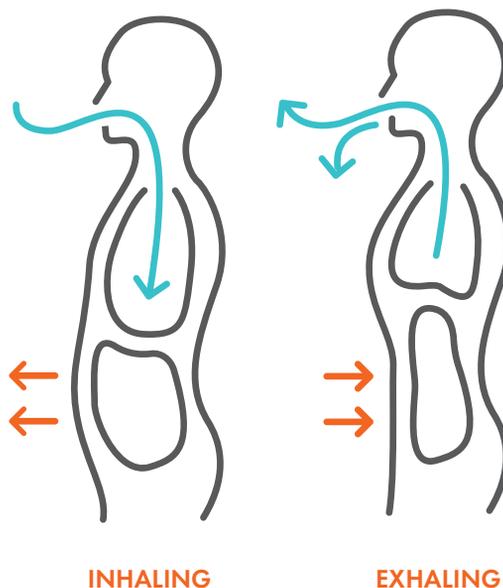
Pursed lip breathing and abdominal breathing exercises have been found to be beneficial in MG.

These exercises can improve respiratory endurance as many people with MG have affected respiratory muscles.

### PURSED LIP BREATHING



### ABDOMINAL BREATHING



# EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

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Emotional wellness involves the ability to engage in emotional self-regulation. Emotional self-regulation refers to an individual's ability to manage their emotions and have the appropriate emotions for the situation at hand. It allows us to recognize, identify, and define our emotions and the triggers that incite them.



## The Role of Stress

A common definition of “stress” is any experience that causes tension—whether physical, psychological, or emotional—especially if it sets off the “fight or flight” response.

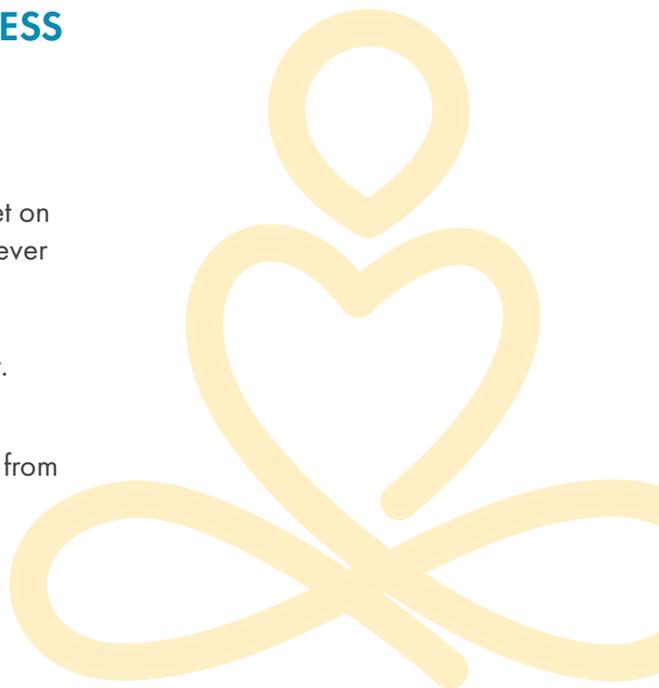
Learning to manage stress can help reduce its negative effects on the body and achieve emotional wellness. Mindfulness, which is a form of meditation that involves focusing on the present moment, can help facilitate this.



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## GUIDE TO PRACTICING MINDFULNESS

- 1** Find a quiet place.
- 2** Sit in a chair with your back supported and feet on the ground, in a cross-legged position, or however is comfortable.
- 3** Close your eyes, or focus on a stationary point.
- 4** Take a few cleansing breaths. Scan your body from head to toe, relaxing as you go.
- 5** Then observe your breath. In. Out.
- 6** If thoughts enter your mind, notice them but don't chase them. Watch them float by like a fish in an aquarium.
- 7** If this is your first time meditating, start with 5 minutes; work your way up to 20 minutes.
- 8** If you can't find 20 minutes, do it for 5 minutes, 4 times a day. This is a practice best done daily.



## SOCIAL WELLNESS

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When we engage in positive social interactions, we are rewarded with a sense of belonging. Simple positive reinforcement explains why toxic relationships are hazardous to your health, and why individuals with stronger friendships and social networks live longer, happier lives.

Many MG patients find social connectedness through organizations like The Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America. MGFA fosters community through localized support groups that offer educational resources and social and recreational activities.

Learn more here: [www.myasthenia.org](http://www.myasthenia.org)

## SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

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Spiritual wellness encourages strong spiritual bonds and thriving spirituality.

Determine how you choose to nurture your spirituality, and devote time to it regularly. Doing so will make you feel grounded.

It has no connection with religion.

## INTELLECTUAL WELLNESS

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From an evolutionary standpoint, humans are innately curious.

Keeping well informed about your condition and keeping up on research is one way to stay in touch with intellectual wellness. Keep in mind it's okay to question your doctor.

## OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS

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Occupational wellness describes someone's satisfaction and fulfillment with their job. Ultimately, it refers to happiness in our work life.

Finding a healthy work-life balance is even more important for those with MG. Having an understanding manager, as well as co-workers who are willing to partner in your wellness will go a long way. Involve your doctor to help you with this.

## ENVIRONMENTAL WELLNESS

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Environmental wellness refers to outdoor immersion and experiences with nature. Gardening, planting trees, and preserving natural environments are hands-on ways to get in touch with your environment.

These activities are great stress relievers as well.

## FINANCIAL WELLNESS

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Financial wellness and occupational wellness are definitely related, but each requires its own consideration.

While occupational wellness deals with job satisfaction and career fulfillment, financial wellness deals solely with finances. It evaluates your financial stability, income, expenses, and debts owed.

Having an autoimmune disease like MG can involve high medical expenses, so financial planning is key.



## SAMPLE DAILY ROUTINE

### Morning / Breakfast

Wake up  
Take medication  
Moderate exercise / Breathing exercise  
Anti-inflammatory breakfast

### Mid-day / Lunch

Work  
Take medication  
Anti-inflammatory lunch  
Complete work / Work-life balance  
Come home / Spend time with family / Outdoor activities

### Evening / Dinner

Take medication  
Meditation  
Light anti-inflammatory dinner  
Unwind / Catch up on bills  
Say thank you  
Get a good night's sleep