



# TIPS for Living With Myasthenia Gravis

Myasthenia gravis is a chronic autoimmune disease that weakens the body's muscles and causes fatigue. It results from impaired communication between nerves and muscles. The disease often occurs in women younger than 40 and in men older than 60. There is no cure for myasthenia gravis, but the following tips can help you manage its symptoms.

**Pinpoint your triggers.** Identify which myasthenia gravis symptoms you have, how long symptoms last, and what events may have triggered them. Record your symptoms in a notebook or pocket calendar. Remember to bring this information and share it with all of your health care practitioners during visits.

**Monitor your vision.** Because some people with myasthenia gravis may have double vision, droopy eyelids, or cataracts, think carefully before you drive. Using an eye patch while reading or watching TV may relieve double vision. Get regular eye exams, especially if you are taking steroid medication.

**Rest often.** Emotional and physical stress can worsen your myasthenia gravis symptoms. Set aside time to rest and take naps, which will improve your symptoms. You also may notice that you require more sleep, compared with the time before your diagnosis.

**Note side effects of your medication.** Read the fine print about side effects on the labels of your medication for myasthenia gravis. Discuss any side effects with your doctor. You may need additional medications or supplements.

**Exercise within your limits.** Lack of exercise may cause fatigue, but never exercise if you are feeling weak. Using an elliptical machine may be a good way to build your exercise regimen. Ask your doctor for guidelines before starting any exercise program.

**Make tasks less cumbersome.** Place the things that you need within reach and avoid getting down on the floor or standing on a ladder. You can conserve your energy by operating appliances such as an electric can opener and an electric mixer. Plastic dishes and silverware also may be helpful because they are light.

**Prepare for travel.** Traveling when your myasthenia gravis is active can be challenging. Plan and book air travel in advance to ensure that assistance will be available, wear a medical ID emblem, and keep your luggage to a minimum, especially if you require help with your belongings.

**Develop a support system.** Consider telling close friends and family members about your myasthenia gravis. Depending on the severity of your disease, you may need their moral support and assistance with attending doctor appointments and performing home duties.

*This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at [info@neurologyreviews.com](mailto:info@neurologyreviews.com).*

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