WALK TO END LUPUS NOW®

— Media Outreach Toolkit —
GETTING STARTED

Reaching out to your local media to share your story is a great way to raise awareness of lupus and inform your community about the Lupus Foundation of America’s *Walk to End Lupus Now™* events. Reporters want to hear from real people with compelling stories who have been impacted by lupus. You can play a critical role in helping to raise awareness of lupus and the impact of the disease on your community, attract walkers, increase fundraising, and elevate the profile of the Foundation in your service area. This toolkit will cover some basic strategies, guidelines and tips on working with the media, as well as template materials to get you started.

### Tips for Contacting the Media

- Start by identifying what media outlet and reporter you want to contact – local papers, access TV stations, and local radio. You can usually find contact information for reporters on the media outlet’s website. We also recommend contacting your Walk Manager if you need help finding the right outlet or contact.

- A simple email to gauge interest is a good starting point. This is often called a “pitch letter” Your email should summarize your lupus story, why you are participating in the Walk, and key event details—time, date, location etc. A template is provided below.

- Reach out to the media approximately 2-4 weeks prior to the Walk. Generally, Tuesday through Thursday during business hours are the best timeframes for reaching out to reporters. Avoid holidays and busy times of the year.

- Do not include attachments. We recommend you include a link to the Walk website or paste a copy of the press release that can be obtained from your Walk Manager in the body of the email.

- Be clear and specific regarding what you are offering and what you are asking, and always be respectful of their time by getting to the point quickly.

- Always include a phone number at the end of your email, and be sure to check your messages frequently as responsiveness will give them a good sense of whether or not they want to pursue the opportunity – make it easy for them.

- Do not call a reporter unless they expressed interest or you believe that there is a high likelihood that they’d be interested in covering your story. If you leave a message, keep it brief and be clear on why you are calling with detailed information on how/when they can get back in touch with you.

- If a reporter is not responding to you, then you may also email your information to the main newsroom. A general email and phone number for the newsroom can usually be found on the website. If they are interested the newsroom will respond, or pass it along to the appropriate contact.

- An alternative way to get your story out there is to submit a Letter to the Editor. You can usually find guidelines and a form for submission on their website. A template is provided below.

- Be upfront about why you are participating in *Walk to End Lupus Now™*— this is your personal mission, and you are not working for the Lupus Foundation of America, nor do you represent the Foundation. Reporters like to hear from real people with compelling stories to share so it’s important to be clear on this point. If the reporter asks to speak with a representative of the Foundation then contact your local Walk Manager.

- DON’T BE DISCOURAGED. Reporters and editors are very busy, on multiple deadlines, and get overwhelmed with the number voicemails and emails they receive, so don’t be discouraged if you don’t get a response.
Hi [NAME] –

On [DATE/TIME] I will be participating in the Lupus Foundation of America’s Walk to End Lupus Now event LOCATION in X city along with [X NUMBER OF ATTENDEES].

I am reaching out to you because I would like to share my story broadly, and how I/my family have been impacted lupus.

INSERT BRIEF (3-4 SENTENCES) STORY/CONNECTION TO LUPUS AND WHY YOU ARE WALKING.

EXAMPLE: I was diagnosed with lupus in 2012 after four years of meeting with multiple doctors and it has forever altered my identity. Prior to the onset of symptoms, I was an active, 32 year old who loved being on the go and spending time with family and friends, but after my diagnosis I had to stop working and drastically alter my lifestyle. Being a part of the Walk to End Lupus Now is an opportunity to surround myself with friends, family and those who understand the impact of lupus on your life. I have raised more than X thousands of dollars for lupus research and education.

For your reference, I have included a link to all of the event details: INSERT LINK TO WALK WEBSITE

Please let me know if you are interested, or if I can provide any additional information.

[Your name]

[Phone number]
**SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR:**

**Dear Editor:**

1st PARAGRAPH - Start with why you’re writing. Share your story. You may want to begin with an interesting hook such as, “Imagine being so exhausted that you can’t move or not being able to button your pants because your hands ache. These are symptoms that those with lupus struggle with daily.”

2nd PARAGRAPH - Share your personal connection to lupus here. How has it impacted you, your family, or a loved one? How has the Walk impacted you? Why is the Walk important to the community and those affected by lupus. Include details about the local programs that are supported by funds raised from the Walk.

The largest lupus walk program in the country, the Lupus Foundation of America’s Walk to End Lupus Now™ events bring communities together to raise awareness of the disease and rally public support for lupus research and education programs.

Tell people how they can get involved here, “You can show support to those suffering with lupus by registering for the Walk to End Lupus Now [ENTER CITY] event on DATE.” Tell them where they can find more details.

CLOSING - End on a positive note, “Together, we can help solve the cruel mystery of lupus. Register for the Walk today and join the fight.”

Sincerely,

NAME

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**MEDIA TALKING POINTS**

**About the Walk to End Lupus Now™**

- **Walk to End Lupus Now™** events are conducted nationwide by the Lupus Foundation of America and its national network to raise money for lupus research, increase awareness of lupus, and rally public support for those who suffer from its brutal impact.
- **Walk to End Lupus Now™**, is America’s largest lupus Walk program - Every year more than 70,000 people affected by lupus participate in the Walk, which has grown to more than 60 cities across the country.

**Specific Walk Information**

- The Walk to End Lupus Now™ in [your community] takes place at [LOCATION] on [DATE]. Registration for the Walk begins at [TIME] and the Walk begins at [TIME].
- Walkers have two route options, ranging from one to three miles.
- Funds raised through the [CITY] Walk event will support life-saving research and education programs for people with lupus.

**About Lupus**

- Lupus is an unpredictable and misunderstood autoimmune disease that ravages different parts of the body from the skin or joints to the heart or kidneys.
- An estimated 1.5 million Americans have lupus. 90 percent of people with lupus are women; but men and children also develop lupus.
- It can take years to diagnose lupus. More than half of the people with lupus visited four or more doctors and suffered four or more years before being diagnosed.

**About the Lupus Foundation of America**

- The Lupus Foundation of America is the only national force devoted to solving the mystery of lupus, while giving caring support to those who suffer from its brutal impact.
- Through a comprehensive program of research, education, and advocacy, we lead the fight to improve the quality of life for all people affected by lupus.