

International Ataxia Awareness Day

Ataxia Awareness Day is held on 25 September every year. This year we are asking more people than ever to get involved and help spread the word that ataxia exists.

Recent research commissioned by Ataxia UK showed that just 7% of people know what ataxia is, even though over 10,000 people in the UK have the condition. Ataxia Awareness Day is a chance to change this and tell the world that we are working hard to support people and find treatments and a possible cure for ataxia.

This year we're asking all our Friends to do something to mark Ataxia Awareness Day, however small. Here are some easy ideas on how to get involved and raise awareness.

No time to raise awareness?

- Wear your Ataxia UK T-shirt on Friday, 25 September and tell people what it means. Why not take a picture of yourself wearing your T-shirt somewhere unusual and send it to us? Have a look on this page for inspiration! T-shirts are free to anyone raising money for Ataxia UK.
- Use your online profile picture, Facebook, Twitter, or Myspace account, sign-in name, email signature, or status to direct people to www.ataxiaawarenessday.org (not sure what this means? Get in touch and we'll explain!) You could also email or text all your friends and contacts about the Awareness Day.
- If you're shopping or searching online on 25 September, raise some free donations for Ataxia UK by using www.thegivingmachine.co.uk and www.everyclick.org.uk.
- Get a free Ataxia UK DVD and show one of our films to your friends, work colleagues, or community.

Put flyers in your local supermarket, library, GP surgery, or hospital

You are welcome to customise any of our leaflets with a sticky label featuring your local branch or group, and the new awareness day flyers are also designed to be customised and/or pinned up.

Friends Top Tip: "Bring your own pins when you go to pin things up, and ask permission first".

Get published

Do you know of a local or hospital newsletter, a parish magazine, or anywhere else you could get featured? If you're going to an event or sports match in September, why not see if you can use it to spread the word about Ataxia Awareness Day?

Friends Top Tip: "Find out who produces the programme for your weekend football or sports match, as they often feature stories about fans".

Wheely Wobbly Walks

Last year the walks were a great success with four branches taking part. This year we want even more people to walk, wheel, or wobble for ataxia awareness. Setting up a walk is simple, and anyone can do it, whether you're in a branch or not. Do it in a wheelchair, with a walking aid, on a bike, on roller skates: however you can.

If you live near London, why not join in our London Wheely Wobbly Walk, in association with the London branch and the Ataxia-Telangiectasia Society? (www.atsociety.org.uk) The walk will be held on Sunday, 27 September in Victoria Park, in order to allow more people to come. Last year we had beautiful weather and a great time.

Work with others

You will need permission from your council to collect money in town, or to hold an information stall in the high street, so why not involve them in your plans? For events in shopping centres, get in touch with

the management office. What about your local school or college? There may be students who need to study citizenship and would like to hear from a local charity group, or media students who could film your event as a project.

You could even invite local celebrities or your local MP or mayor, as even if they don't have much time, they may be able to spare ten minutes to launch an event and have a quick picture taken.

Friends Top Tip: "In our branch we've found that that local Lions or Rotary clubs are often very keen to help, and usually have funds to give away to charities".

Contact your local press

Why not help out with our media work and get in touch with your own local paper, radio, or TV station? They are always looking for interesting local news or a local link to national events like the Awareness Day. To receive our new media Top Tips sheet and sample press release, get in touch today.

A really simple way to get coverage is to phone up a radio station with a request for Ataxia Awareness Day! Have the facts to hand that ataxia is a degenerative neurological condition, and mention why you support Ataxia UK and if possible, www.ataxiaawarenessday.org.

Friends Top Tip: "Papers and magazines are often keen to receive content for their Letters page, so why not email or write in about the awareness day?"

Idea: Melanie Priest-Taylor was away on a cruise on awareness day last year, so she walked 5km round the deck of the ship, raising lots of awareness and money for Ataxia UK!



Register with us!

If you are planning to hold a Wheely Wobbly Walk or any other kind of event please register with Ataxia UK so we can support you and find out how much distance you'll be covering: together we could walk the length of Great Britain (that's 603 miles or 970 km as the crow flies)! We are here to answer your questions from finding disabled loos, to the law on collecting money, so get in touch today.

What we can supply:

- Fundraising pack
- Media Top Tips Pack (new for 2009)
- Awareness day flyers (new for 2009)
- T-shirts, balloons, and more
- Collecting tins and buckets



Our new 2009 awareness day flyer is now available from the office, so get in touch today to order copies

Idea: Why not hold a sponsored skydive for awareness day, or dive in water instead, or do abseiling, rowing, or something else a bit different or wacky around the awareness day?

Join us on Facebook for Awareness Day

Ataxia UK has set up a new Facebook group as a place to chat to others affected by ataxia and keep up to date on all our news and events. To join us go to www.facebook.com and search for 'Ataxia UK'. The more members we have the more awareness we raise!



Facebook is a great way to raise awareness and reach new people

Join up online at:

www.ataxiaawarenessday.org and get in touch with Claire at the office to find out more or register your event.



Take part in our media campaign

Ever wished that more people knew what 'ataxia' meant when you talked about it? One way to change this is by being a media volunteer and telling your story in the press, radio, or TV. This year we'll be working hard to get coverage about ataxia in the national and regional press and we need your help. We really need lots more case studies in order to get ataxia featured in the media, so please call us today if you've got an interesting story to tell. We'd love to hear from you if you have an unusual diagnosis story, if you've achieved something amazing with ataxia, if you're planning a brilliant or wacky fundraising event locally, or just want to tell your own story of living with ataxia. We are especially in need of stories about children and young people but we'd love to hear from everyone.

To find out more and ask any questions you may have, contact Claire at the office for a chat.

Idea: Get some of our merchandise and wear it or give it to people: we have very low-cost wristbands, badges, pens, tea towels and more available. We can also send you free Ataxia UK stickers and balloons, plus a T-shirt if you are raising money.

Idea: Don't forget Gift Aid if you are giving or collecting donations on ataxia awareness day. If you're a UK taxpayer we can claim 28% extra from the government, at no cost to you.



Frankie and Louise featured in the Daily Mail and raised lots of awareness