



Engaging with the Media: Guide to Media Types and Contacting Journalists

Who to contact – preparing your media list

A good media list contains the names of media (newspapers, magazines, television news, online news sites, radio programs, etc.) that you want to contact. Also, the list includes details of the journalists you should preferably contact, including their titles, phone number, email address, etc.

Some companies keep databases of different media outlets and the contact details of journalists that write for them. These can be expensive to access and aren't the only way to discover these details.

Most media outlets have an online presence, so an internet search is an excellent first step. You can find outlets, read articles they have published, watch interviews and programs they have broadcast, and begin to collate your list. Often the department or journalist will be named, and there will be contact details on the website. If you cannot find this information, look for a health or news desk and try that first. Always try to find the right contact before you call to talk about your story.

As you develop your media list, it can be helpful to do some homework on the outlets. Reviewing their archives will indicate the types of stories they cover and the tone and the angle they take. Consider the stories you have read and see if your type of story is something they have covered.

Introduction to different types of media

Daily newspapers

These are the ones that you buy or have delivered each day. They will contain a variety of stories, typically national events/news, politics, crime, finance, health, etc. Depending on your country, there may be broadsheet newspapers focusing on more "highbrow" stories and tabloid newspapers, which would carry more "everyman" stories. These papers will be most interested in the most important health stories, new data, new products, political decisions impacting health, health scandal, etc. As they focus on stories with the national interest, they may not feel a story on HAE will appeal to their readers. Unless you have high-profile support for your event or a very compelling story from someone with HAE, they may not be interested. The editorial board determines and writes the paper's official position on various issues. Some daily newspapers offer special sections – often one will be health – on certain days of the week. These weekly sections will have different contacts to the daily stories on that topic.

The turnaround for stories in national daily newspapers is rapid. So, if you send your press release on Monday, if they cover the story, it would likely be online that day and then in print on Tuesday. You should most likely plan on contacting these media a little in advance of **hae day :-)** (and embargo the story for the day itself). This means they can write the story ahead of time and publish it on the event or awareness day itself. Initial contact should be at least two weeks before your event or awareness day for the weekly specialist sections.



Weekly non-national newspapers

These are usually local or regional newspapers, which strongly focus on news of interest to their primary geographical area. They will have a smaller staff than the national papers, and often one reporter will cover more than one area. Their focus is on things of interest in a local/regional area; they are more likely to be interested in **hae day :-)** events being organized locally/regionally and could be a great way to raise interest in your event before it happens. They might also be interested in a local case study. They may have a picture desk and be happy to send along a reporter and photographer to cover your event on the day. As the turnaround for stories in these newspapers is longer than daily newspapers, plan to contact them at least a week or two before your event.

Magazines

There are many different types of magazines, for instance, women's interests, hobbies, culture, music, health, living, etc. They will be published less regularly than newspapers, e.g., weekly, monthly, or even longer. They will plan their issues weeks or sometimes months in advance. As a result, they focus less on news events, as they can be out of date when they go to press. Instead, they usually contain longer, in-depth features on less time-sensitive issues. If you have an event or awareness day you want to contact a magazine about, you need to do this well in advance. Or, you can use **hae day :-)** awareness day as the reason for the contact and offer a great human interest and case study story for publication in the future.

Broadcast – radio/TV

Radio stations vary hugely in their focus and audience. A general broadcast station will usually have a mix of current/topical stories and programs and then feature stories or programs. It is a broadly similar approach for television news programs/channels. In the same way, there are national and local newspapers; there may also be national and local TV channels/programs or radio channels/programs you can target. The approach here is a mixture of that for daily newspapers and magazines. If you target a national news program, follow the daily newspaper approach. Use the local newspaper approach to target a local news program, a non-time-sensitive program, or a dedicated news channel.

Medical media

There may also be specialist medical publications targeting physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. These publications often focus on new data or changes to health law/political approach and management strategies. Suppose you are interested in targeting medical publications. In that case, it might be worth discussing this with your doctor and nurse to hear what specialist medical magazines they read and if they have a copy you could see.

Online media

As online outlets are not working to a print or broadcast deadline, they often publish more content on a more frequent basis. Have a look online at what sites have covered an awareness day or health story in your country and build a list of contacts for those sites. You



might find that the online part of a particular media has different contacts to the print or broadcast side so always check this out.

Pitching your story – your talking points

Always prepare what you are going to say to the journalist before you actually contact them by email or phone. These are your talking points and are covered in the information at haeday.org.

Focus on what makes the hae day :-) important for their audience now by including timely information about an upcoming event or activity surrounding the awareness day or tying the story into current events and media trends. It is also important to think like the journalist's readers, listeners, or viewers while crafting your pitch. Look for trends or themes in previous coverage and capitalize on those in your pitch.

Once your media list is completed, simply start making phone calls and/or sending out emails. If calling, ask whether a reporter or editor who specializes in health issues is available. If not, ask to speak to a reporter or editor specialized in human-interest stories. When in contact with the right person, make a passionate appeal that your story is of great value to all readers/viewers.

Keep an active outreach list

Each time you speak to or exchange emails with a journalist, take thorough notes and keep them all in one place. A spreadsheet is a valuable tool to use to track them. This will help you stay organized, and you will always know where you stand with an opportunity. It will also remind you of the last correspondence, so you don't follow up with a journalist too frequently or infrequently.

Your story may go further than you think

If a journalist writes your story, their publication may not be the only one to use it. Often print/online articles or interviews are picked up by other journalists and shared further online. Your message can go further and some journalists are looking for interesting stories to share, rather than creating their own.