



What is the Co-op's social networking site and how can it be used?

My Health Information Co-op provides its members with a social networking and online community; sometimes these sites are referred to as social learning sites. Like Facebook, the groups in our social networking site are a foundational feature of the site. In this document, we take a top-level look at what groups are and how they can be used by Co-op Members.

Fundamentally, groups allow you to create communities within our larger Co-op community. These groups can be just family members, you and your caregivers, of a patient support group. The power of this functionality can be seen in mainstream services such as Facebook, Reddit, LinkedIn, etc.

The most prominent feature of a group is the activity wall. This is a chronological list of community-generated content, made up of text, pictures, videos, comments, and ratings. Groups allow members to talk, share, plan and collaborate. Anyone can create a group and they are administered by one or more people in the group.

Groups allow their participants to address a diverse range of interests in a manageable form.

The Co-op's social networking site gives groups some great default features and functionality, and each group administrator can turn on and off some features:

- Co-op members can search, discover, and join groups.
- Co-op members who have joined groups can post text, pictures, links and video to the group's 'activity wall'.
- Co-op members can comment and reply to activity wall posts.
- Notifications and email alerts can be used to keep group members engaged.
- Individuals can be offered a personalised activity wall, bringing together recent activity from all the different groups they have joined.
- Privacy and assignable moderation controls offer added flexibility for group management.



Getting the most from the Co-op's social networking site.

When you're planning how to best use groups there are three areas that many people ask about: 1) management of the group; 2) privacy settings; and, 3) what features to enable or turn off.

Who will set up and manage your group?

Do you want all your group members to be able to create and administer sub-groups and discussion forms? For example, your Patient Support Group can have unlimited number of sub-groups and discussion forms. This can be a great hands-off approach to offering members ultimate flexibility. However, you need to be mindful of long tail effects of having multiple groups with overlapping similar topics.

Or do you want an administrator to set up your group and sub-groups. Administrators can allow members to join the group or require invites and approvals. This approach can prevent group topics overlapping but it can stifle the participation of group members.

Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses. Good planning will help identify the best approach for you and help uncover middle ground options. For example, allowing group members to request the creation of a new group, then having administrative control over the actual creation.

Your group can be public, private, or hidden

Public groups will be accessible to all Co-op community members. Hidden groups are not visible within the wider Co-op community, only to the members of the hidden group. Hidden groups are perfect for families to communicate amongst themselves, or for sensitive topics. Private groups, like hidden groups require an invitation to join. The key point of difference is private groups are visible within your community and members may request membership.

What features will your group have?

Anyone who has used Facebook groups will find the group they create within the Co-op's site, very familiar. For example, groups can have all of the following features:

Discussion Forums – activity walls are a great way of getting people talking. But the way content is managed, with newest posts always pushing older content down, can be fleeting. Forums offer a more persistent way for members to engage with each other in the form of more focused conversations. Adding forum functionality to groups brings focus to your community. Examples of where forum-like behaviour can be useful include conversations for events or FAQ sections for self-help groups.

Sticky posts – Activity streams are great but as we just noted, content can be fleeting. Sticky posts let group admins promote older **content** to the top of the page and can be used to highlight topical forum conversations.

Notifications - The **notification** system allows your members to get notified when they are mentioned, receive a message, or need to be notified about other activity.

Private Messaging – Your members can send messages to each other within the website. We also support media within messages, including photo uploads, emojis and animated GIFs.

Email Invites - Email Invites allows members to send email invitations to non-members to join your community.

Upload & Share – Group members can upload documents and files to their profiles, groups, activity feeds, and forum threads. Create a shared document space and photo gallery.

Zoom Meetings – Schedule and view meetings and recordings.

Event Planning – Free feature-rich calendar and events management suite. Publish events and then generate an activity feed (like a Facebook newsfeed).