

HEADFIRST

Newsletter / September 2020



NHF IS PROUD TO BE A RESOURCE AND RAISE AWARENESS FOR THE 40+ MILLION AMERICANS WHO LIVE WITH HEADACHE AND MIGRAINE DISEASE.

We appreciate your contributions which help the Foundation to continue to raise awareness and advocate for those experiencing headache and migraine, as well as provide easy access to the resources and research needed to better understand these disorders.

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★ **FEATURED ARTICLE:**

Migraine Disease and Other Headache Disorders in the Workplace

The change in seasons typically brings a renewed focus, and for many this includes longer hours spent on work. With this time also comes a reminder of the importance of raising awareness for migraine and other headache disorders in the workplace.

Interestingly, a report from Health Union showed 93% of those experiencing migraine noted that the disease impacts their ability to work. In order for employees with headache and migraine disease to be successful professionally, it is critical for these individuals to receive adjusted accommodations in the workplace.

One of the best ways to raise awareness in the workplace is by educating human resources, supervisors, and other coworkers on the severity of migraine disease. Employees shouldn't hesitate to request accommodations such as computer screen blue light filters, a change in office lighting, an odor-free environment, flexible work hours, and possibly a reserved "quiet, dark" place at the office. The National Headache Foundation has created an initiative, WorkMigraine, which includes a set of educational modules for employees, human resource departments, supervisors, and within the C-suite. You may want to share this information with your employer. Access to the modules are free but the company must register for access. Advise your employer/HR department to contact the Foundation at mfranklin@headaches.org.

If you experience migraine attacks, you should keep a migraine kit readily accessible at work — this kit could include an eye mask, cold pack, medication, as well as a list of appropriate additional medications and emergency contacts. Taking preventative steps, like maintaining a normal sleeping and eating schedule, may also be a helpful way to mitigate migraine attacks at work.

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NHF's 34th Annual Golden Gala (Virtual for 2020)



Celebrating 50 Years of Community

We hope you can join us on Saturday, Oct. 24 at 8pm ET for the National Headache Foundation's 50th anniversary gala and fundraiser. This year's format will be virtual, and guests can enjoy a silent auction, entertainment, awards and more — all in support of those living with headache and migraine disease.

Registration is free, and registrants will automatically be entered in a drawing for a \$200 Amazon gift card. The winner will be announced during the event.

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? DID YOU KNOW?

If you live with migraine disease, you can help prevent an attack at work by following a few simple steps, including:

1

Eat Regularly: A busy workday, filled with meetings and deadlines, can make anyone easily forget to eat. If you live with migraine disease, it's critical to nourish your body regularly to prevent an attack. Ensure healthy snacks, high in protein, are at your desk so they're accessible in case you miss a meal!

2

Drink Water: Dehydration is one of the most common triggers of migraine disease. Be sure to drink water regularly throughout the workday and keep water bottles handy in your purse, brief case or at your workspace.

3

Consume Caffeine Consistently: Drinking the same amount of caffeine daily will prevent caffeine withdrawal headache. Caffeine can also help relieve headaches. Make sure a cup of Joe, tea or your other favorite caffeinated beverage is nearby during the workday to help prevent the onset of headache.

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IN THE NEWS

Working from home due to COVID-19 may be resulting in an increase in migraine attacks and tension headaches. A Nielsen study showed that screen time is up 60% from pre-pandemic screen time, which could be a major factor behind the increase of headache and migraine attacks. A few ways to mitigate this includes taking frequent screen time breaks and trying out some gadgets like screen protectors and blue light glasses.

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Migraine at Work

The Migraine at Work Coalition, with support from Amgen, Allergan, and Lilly, continues focusing on providing tools for those experiencing migraine and other headache disorders, whether or not the attacks occur at the workplace. The group's target audience are the employers and executives who may support the coalition's mission to create healthier, stigma-free and more productive workplaces.

It is estimated that migraine disease costs the US economy \$78B each year. One chronic migraine patient costs their employer over \$10K in direct and indirect costs. Migraine disease can increase employee turnover. Another concern is the resulting disability that may occur from migraine and other headache disorders. This coalition represents various organizations in the headache advocacy space, including World Health Education Foundation, the Headache and Migraine Policy Forum, and the National Headache Foundation. Important research into the impact of migraine disease in the workplace is being conducted by Dr. Robert Shapiro of the University of Vermont.

You can access tools, resources, articles, and more at migraineatwork.org and register for their newsletter coming soon. If you are an executive or employee with migraine disease, you can also request to join our private groups on LinkedIn. Here you will have the opportunity to discuss your experience with others and work together to engage your organization to advocate for their most important asset — the employee.



TIPS & TRICKS

Stigma has plagued the headache and migraine community for decades. To further advocacy efforts, it is critical to eliminate the discrimination of those living with migraine disease in the workplace from the government and by public institutions. A recent study revealed:

16.2% of white-collar workforce presenteeism is attributed to migraine and headache disease

Migraine presenteeism might account for 4% of U.S. lost workforce productivity

As it relates to migraine in the workplace, those living with the disease should not let stigma prevent them from getting necessary accommodations.

Learn more below in Dr. Shapiro's article on 'What Will it Take to Move the Needle for Headache Disorders? An Advocacy Perspective' and in an additional reading by [Katie MacDonald](#) on 'Moving the Needle - The Patient's Perspective.'

[READ MORE](#)



Listen to [Heads UP](#), the National Headache Foundation's official weekly podcast where experts discuss a range of topics related to headache. Recent episodes include:

Episode 19: Migraine at Work

Episode 74: Migraine at Work

Episode 69: New Drug Data Alert - Atogepant

ASK THE EXPERTS

QUESTION:

My migraine attacks started while I was in high school, always around my periods. They were annoying but I was able to do my school work, and I finished college in 4 years.

But after my second pregnancy, the attacks became more frequent. With medications, I was able to continue working as a marketing director but my absences were more frequent. If I took the triptan for my migraine attack quickly, I could continue at the office. But the nausea and dizziness that accompany the headache were indeed troublesome.

With the pandemic quarantine, I have been able to work from home. The attacks continue but at least I'm home and can rest. But last week, we received notice that we are expected to return to our offices on October 5. I'm very

worried about the commute, the chance for getting the COVID-19 virus, and the effects of the headaches on my work performance.

Should I discuss my migraine disease with my supervisor? I am concerned about the reaction of the "higher-ups." And along with my medications, how would you suggest I manage the attacks when I am the office?

ANSWER:

This is a touchy situation. In an ideal world, you would discuss your migraine disease with your employer and they would make accommodations for you such as flexible working hours and possibly working from home when migraine attacks flare. When at work your employer would make the workplace "migraine friendly" by finding alternatives to florescent lighting and the glare of computer screens.



Vincent Martin, MD
President,
National Headache
Foundation

The reality is that some employers might not understand migraine disease and might even consider it negatively. So, you really have to decide how open your employer is in working with you regarding your migraine attacks. If they are open-minded then a discussion might be reasonable. If not then you will have to decide if a discussion is worth the risk.

On the positive side, there are many old and new therapies to try to treat the acute attacks and also to prevent them. I would suggest that you consult with a physician that is an expert in the management of headache disorders.

*Vincent Martin, MD
President, National Headache Foundation
University of Cincinnati*

Each month we'll feature your questions and our answers about headache and migraine in the newsletter. If you have a question about headache or migraine, please email us and keep an eye out for the answer from one of our doctors!

Email: info@headaches.org

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