

Migraine information for workplaces

Around 1 in 7 people live with migraine. For many of these people, migraine can have a huge impact on working life. But a small amount of support can make a big difference.



What is migraine?

Migraine is a complex, painful neurological condition. People often think of migraine as being 'just a headache'. But in fact, it can be a whole-body experience. Common symptoms of migraine attacks include:

- moderate to severe throbbing head pain
- problems with sight such as seeing flashing lights
- being very sensitive to light, sounds and smells
- fatigue
- feeling sick and being sick.

Other less common symptoms can include numbness or tingling sensations and speech problems. Different types of migraine can cause additional symptoms too, like vertigo, dizziness and muscle weakness. Someone's symptoms may change and evolve over time.

When someone has a migraine attack, they may not be able to function normally. An attack usually lasts between four hours and three days. But for some, it can go on much longer. Some people have occasional attacks, while for others they are very frequent.

Depending on how much impact someone's migraine has, it may be considered a disability under law. It doesn't matter if it's usually controlled with treatment.



How can people manage their migraine?

People manage their migraine in a number of ways.

- Taking acute or 'rescue' medication, such as painkillers and anti-sickness medicine to stop or shorten an attack. This isn't effective for everyone. And taking painkillers too frequently can lead to medication overuse headache.
- Taking preventive medication. This can help to reduce how many migraine attacks someone gets or how severe they are. But it doesn't usually stop migraine attacks completely, and it can take a long time to find one that works.
- Exploring non-drug treatment options. These include supplements, acupuncture, devices for migraine, relaxation techniques and psychological therapies.
- Self-management. Some people find managing any known triggers, or making certain lifestyle changes helps. But this isn't always possible and it can't stop migraine completely.



How does migraine impact work?

Symptoms of a migraine attack can make it difficult or impossible for people to perform their job fully. Side effects from migraine medication such as drowsiness may affect someone's ability to work too. For some people, it can be difficult to stay in work at all.

Workplace triggers for migraine can include:

- the working environment – including lighting, noise or smells
- regular screen work
- work stress
- shift work or overtime that can disrupt sleep and routines.

If someone has a migraine attack during work time, not having adequate support in place can make it much harder to manage or recover quickly.



What helps at work?

With support and some adjustments, most people with migraine are better able to manage their migraine in the workplace. Even small changes can help. These may include things like:

- allowing flexible or remote working
- making changes to the working environment or providing equipment that may help
- having regular, flexible breaks as needed, with access to drinking water
- being able to access a quiet, dark space if needed during a migraine attack.

If someone's migraine is classed as a disability, it means employers have a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to help them perform their role.



How to make a difference in your workplace

You can support people with migraine in your workplace by:

- sharing our information resources and details of the support services we offer
- signing The Migraine Trust's workplace pledge
- booking a migraine awareness session for your organisation
- hosting a fundraising event at work
- matching any fundraising by employees for The Migraine Trust
- becoming a Corporate Partner of The Migraine Trust.

Find out more at: migrainetrust.org/workplace

Find out more

We have a range of information and resources to help, including workplace toolkits for both employees and employers. Find out more at:

- migrainetrust.org/migraineandwork

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If you have feedback on our information, please get in touch at: feedback@migrainetrust.org

Contact our Helpline on **0808 802 0066** (Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm) or through our contact form and Live Chat service at migrainetrust.org/support. You can also email us at info@migrainetrust.org.

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