

cove

When Migraine Gets in the Way of Careers

1 in 7 people have migraine worldwide, meaning that if you work in a company with 500 people, 70 of them could be suffering from a debilitating condition. Yet, they're suffering in silence because migraine is a misunderstood condition that too many people write off as "just a headache." This silent suffering means that those people are being penalized at work, unable to get ahead because their needs are going unacknowledged by their companies and even themselves. It's simply too big of a cost to ignore, for both employees and employers.

Here at Cove, we don't think being a migraine sufferer means you have to give up on having a fulfilling job. In a survey of nearly 1,000 people, a combination of Cove customers and other migraine sufferers, Cove set out to better understand the impact of migraine on careers, to identify coping strategies, and to provide tools that make it easier to get ahead.

12%
of the U.S. population are
diagnosed with migraine.

That's **39,240,000** people.
And counting.



1 in 5

women suffer
from migraine



There is **at least one person**
suffering from migraine in
25% of U.S. households

7.4

7.4 — The average pain of a
migraine on a scale of 1 to 10, with
10 being absolutely agonizing pain.



It's Time to Take Migraine Attacks Seriously

On the list of the most common illnesses in the world, [migraine comes in at number three](#). And in the US alone, [39 million people suffer from migraine](#). That's a lot of people (enough to fill 650 football stadiums). And don't be mistaken—a migraine is much more severe than the average headache. Yet, because it's an invisible illness and because it's not deadly, it's often overlooked or ignored.

Migraine comes with an array of symptoms that vary depending on the person. But regardless of the symptoms, these attacks can be downright debilitating. In fact, [90% of sufferers report that they cannot function normally during an attack](#). Given that most sufferers have an attack once or twice a month, that's a lot of time to be down for the count. It's even worse for the 4 million people in the US who get a migraine 15+ days every single month. (This is referred to as chronic migraine.)



of sufferers who don't talk about their migraine at work choose to stay quiet because they're afraid they won't be taken seriously.

ACCORDING TO [THE AMERICAN MIGRAINE FOUNDATION](#),

a migraine is “an unprovoked headache” that can last anywhere from 4-72 hours (yes, three full days).

These attacks are “severe enough to markedly restrict or even prohibit routine daily activity and [are] accompanied by nausea or light/sound sensitivity.”

COVE SURVEY DETAILS



965

Participants



68%

are Cove customers



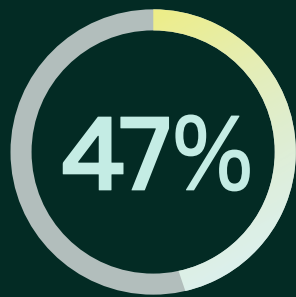
96%

are women

COMMON MIGRAINE SYMPTOMS

- Extreme sensitivity to sound, touch, or smell
- Nausea, vomiting, or dizziness
- Severe pain on one or both sides of the head
- Visual disturbances (flashes of light or blind spots)
- Tingling or numbness in the extremities or face
- Throbbing/pulsing pain

How Migraine Attacks Affect a Person's Career



feel like migraine has held them back from advancing in their career



Almost half of all the currently employed migraine sufferers who took the Cove survey miss 5+ days of work each year due to migraine.

In the US, [157 million sick days each year are attributed to migraine headaches](#). Almost one third have had to turn down new opportunities because of their health issues.

This is frustrating for all parties, but especially for those who have to stress about their job status on top of enduring unimaginable pain, discomfort, and disorientation—something that's completely out of their control. Many feel like their migraine holds them back from progressing in their career. They don't feel like they can apply for a new role at their company or receive a promotion, nor do they feel confident in trying to switch jobs or companies. Here's the thing: While there's no cure for migraine, simple changes can help reduce severity and frequency. Most migraine sufferers report that there are very specific triggers that cause a migraine to come on.

How Workplaces Can Change This

Avoiding these triggers can be game changing for a migraine sufferer. If any of these triggers occur or are present at the workplace (i.e., working too close to the perfume department or staring at a computer screen all day), accommodations should be made to avoid them.

Preventing a Migraine Doesn't Have to Be Expensive

[Most of these requested accommodations cost zero dollars.](#)

- ✓ Moving your desk to a quieter spot in the office
- ✓ Asking for flexible hours or different shifts
- ✓ Providing blocks of uninterrupted work time

There's one major problem, though. Many employees don't feel comfortable talking to their employer about their health issues.

SOME OF THE MOST [COMMON MIGRAINE TRIGGERS](#)

- Caffeine and alcohol
- Hormones
- Smells
- Certain foods
- Lights
- Stress
- Dehydration
- Poor quality sleep
- Weather changes

30%

think co-workers don't take migraine headaches seriously

39%

don't feel comfortable talking about migraines at work

60%

aren't open with their manager about their migraines

Possible Workplace Accommodations

20%

For the sufferers who talked to their HR department about their migraine, only 20% received accommodations.

There's no one-size-fits-all solution.
The below could help reduce trigger exposure.



A flexible schedule



Alternative (a.k.a. non-fluorescent) lighting



Cubicles instead of open office seating



More or modified breaks



Noise abatement procedures



Noise-canceling headsets



Room dividers



Sound machines

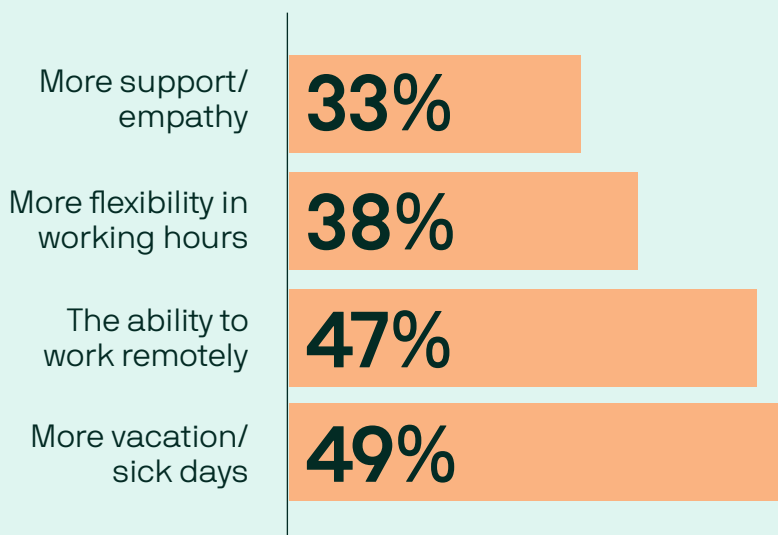


Support animal accommodations



The option to work from home

WHAT WOULD CREATE A BETTER WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR EMPLOYEES WITH MIGRAINE?



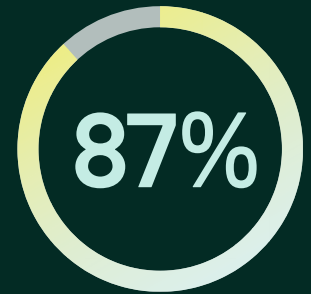
THE SHARED COST OF TREATING MIGRAINE

There's no doubt about it: Migraine is an expensive problem. Each year, the [US loses \\$36 billion](#) to migraine-related healthcare and decreased productivity costs. This includes what the healthcare system (hospitals, insurance companies, etc.) has to pay to treat migraine patients plus the costs associated with an employee missing work or not being able to achieve maximum productivity due to migraine.

Disability and Migraine

While the [Social Security Administration doesn't specifically list migraine on the Disability Evaluation Under Social Security](#) (a.k.a, the Blue Book), those with chronic migraine can receive disability benefits if they can prove that they're "unable to maintain a full-time job and earn a gainful living" because of migraine.

So, what does your employer need to do if you're approved? Well, first of all, as soon as you're approved, you become officially protected by The Americans with Disabilities Act. This means that your company can no longer discriminate against you because you have migraine. (They shouldn't be doing this anyway, but now it's officially illegal.) In addition, they're now required to provide the necessary accommodations you need to avoid triggers and cope with migraine.



87%

of sufferers don't know that they can apply for disability benefits.

Having the Conversation

Remember, getting the help you need benefits both you and your employer, so you shouldn't be scared to reach out for help. Because we know this conversation might be difficult, here are some tips to help it go as smoothly as possible.

Set up a specific time to talk about it: Don't bring this up during your usual check-in or randomly in the office kitchen.

Be open to questions and compromise: Your boss might be completely unfamiliar with what a migraine actually is and how it differs from a typical headache. Be willing to answer some questions. In addition, your ideal solutions just may not work well for the team or company. In this case, see if there's somewhere you can meet in the middle.

Figure out your end goal: Know exactly what you want to get out of this conversation. Do you need a different workspace? An adjusted schedule? Altered job responsibilities?

Prepare talking points: Write down your triggers, the ones that present themselves at your job, how this affects your productivity and well-being, and some possible solutions. You'll also want to bring along any relevant documentation you have.



60%

of sufferers aren't open with their managers about their migraine.

About Cove

Cove brings migraine sufferers the personalized, affordable care and support they deserve. We help our customers take control with clinically-proven medications delivered directly to their doors, customized treatment plans, unlimited access to licensed doctors, a migraine tracking tool, and educational resources.

CONTACT US

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