Managing Migraine at Work

Migraine is a medical condition that is often misunderstood. It affects adults during prime working years and can have a debilitating impact on work, including decreased productivity due to frequent absences. Although some people try to continue working with symptoms, many cannot function or work normally during a migraine.

*Migraine Stigma*

There is a general lack of awareness, including in the workplace, about the seriousness of migraine. There is also a stigma around the condition that is no doubt tied to this lack of awareness. Common myths include the mistaken beliefs that people with migraine are lazy, exaggerating their symptoms or simply unable to cope. In reality, sufferers often feel guilty about missing work and not performing well on the job. They feel embarrassed about how their performance impacts their co-workers. As a result, many people with migraine hide their condition – especially from bosses and co-workers.

*Managing Triggers at Work*

The workplace can be filled with migraine triggers. The first step towards managing these factors is identifying which ones impact you most. Some triggers can be handled by the individual, including learning to manage job stress, limiting caffeine, dialing down the brightness on the computer screen, staying well hydrated and taking breaks from sitting at a computer. Other triggers may be more complex and difficult to avoid without having a conversation with your boss or co-workers. These include noise, general office lighting, odors and smells.

*Workstation Adjustments*

How your workstation is set up matters, especially if you sit at a desk all day. These steps can help reduce the frequency of migraine at work:

* Properly position the chair and computer to reduce muscle strain
* Use an anti-glare monitor cover can to help reduce computer glare
* Adjust overhead fluorescent lighting and add natural light (e.g. a desktop lamp)
* Reduce loud noise – use of ear plugs and/or white noise machines can help

Whether you are a migraine sufferer or are in a position to support a co-worker, the first step to managing migraine at work is to develop a better understanding of the factors that contribute to a migraine and ways to reduce the likelihood of an attack and create a strategy for what to do if a migraine happens at work.

*For e-version, add:* [Click here](https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/what-to-do-when-migraine-strikes-at-work/) for more information on what to do if a migraine comes on at work.