



# 7 Steps for Getting Migraine Support at Work

Telling your employer and coworkers that you have a condition called “chronic migraine,” rather than “headaches,” can help them understand your situation. Migraine is a condition that affects your body’s entire nervous system. (The medical term for this type of condition is “neurologic condition.”) Pain in your head is a major part of migraine, but it is not the only symptom.

Migraines affect your whole life, not just work

After you tell your employer and coworkers that you have a condition called chronic migraine, you can do some or all of the steps below.

**1 Share information about chronic migraine so they understand the condition better.** The National Headache Foundation's fact sheet can help ([www.headaches.org/2011/04/08/statistics-from-the-american-migraine-prevalence-and-prevention-study](http://www.headaches.org/2011/04/08/statistics-from-the-american-migraine-prevalence-and-prevention-study)). Explain that migraines are not just headaches. They are unpredictable and happen over and over again. Although they can sometimes be controlled, they cannot be cured.

**2 Tell your employer and coworkers about your migraine symptoms and triggers and what you do to manage them.** For example, if you get migraines when you skip meals, let them know you try hard to take your meal breaks on time. If you have vision problems when a migraine starts, tell them you need a break to take medication when this happens.

**3 Let your employer and coworkers know you see a doctor for migraines.** Your doctor can write a letter about your migraines, treatment plan, and any changes to your work area that could help you have fewer migraines.

**4 Ask about making changes to your work environment so you have as few migraine triggers as possible.** Also ask whether there is a quiet, dark space where you can take a break if a migraine starts.

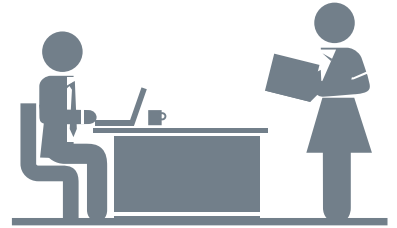
**5 Tell your employer and coworkers that migraines affect your whole life, not just work.** Let them know you miss personal and family activities because of migraines, too.

**6 Set up a system to handle work when you get migraine.** For example, plan to work at home, make up missed time, or have someone cover for you. Check in regularly to make sure the system works well for your employer and coworkers.

**7 Keep some details to yourself.** Your employer and coworkers might not want to hear about vomiting or pain, for example.

## Get help talking to your employer and coworkers

If you work for a company, you can ask someone in human resources or the occupational department about the best way to talk with your employer and coworkers. Some companies also have employee assistance programs, or EAPs, to help employees with health and personal challenges. If you are concerned about talking with your employer or coworkers, talking to someone from one of these departments may help.



**Migraines  
might qualify  
as a disability  
under the  
Americans with  
Disabilities Act**

Depending on how much your migraines affect you, your condition might qualify as a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. You can talk to your doctor or human resources department about this if you have any questions.

When you have migraines, it can be important to understand what your health insurance covers. You might also need to understand what the Family and Medical Leave Act allows, in case you need time off from work.

Developed by Med-IQ in collaboration with the  
National Headache Foundation.