

Hidden disabilities

Migraine

Reasonable Adjustments



says that nearly 8 million people in the UK get regular migraines. It estimates that each working day, up to 90,000 people are absent from work or school due to migraine.

More than 75% of people with migraines experience at least one per month and more than half say they experience severe impairment during attacks.

Over a third of people with migraine say they face difficulties or discrimination at work.

Migraines are among the three most prevalent health conditions in the world.

In a 2002 report, the World Health Organisation ranked migraines amongst the world's top 20 disabling conditions. Yet migraines are frequently not taken seriously.

It affects considerably more women than men.



Migraines are not ordinary headaches. They are recurring headaches of a particular kind. There are often other symptoms, e.g.:

- sensitivity to light and noise;
- eyesight changes; and,
- lethargy and nausea.

About 15% of migraine sufferers get migraines with “aura”, i.e. neurological symptoms such as changes in sight (zigzags, dark spots etc), disturbances to speech and hearing or, more rarely, partial paralysis.



Migraine attacks usually last one or two days.

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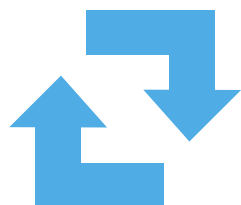
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The effects on the person because of the pain and tiredness involved depends upon how severe and how frequently their migraines occur. One of the biggest effects is difficulties in concentrating.



Here are some questions to determine the substantial adverse effect:

- what are the symptoms of a migraine?
- during an attack, does the person have to go to bed?
- during an attack, is the worker able to read, watch television, concentrate and travel?
- what is the frequency of the attack? and,
- what is the nature of the employer's medication and what is its effect on the symptoms?



Migraines are intermittent, but would usually be covered by disability law as a recurrent condition, except where they occur at extremely infrequent intervals.

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Work Place Reasonable Adjustments: what you and your colleagues can do at your workplace



The difficulty with migraines is their unpredictability. Reasonable adjustments may be either to prevent migraines happening altogether or to enable workers with less incapacitating migraines to work when they do occur.

Always consult the individual.

Examples of adjustments at work could be:

1. Allowing time off (paid or unpaid) or flexible hours.



2. Providing the option of home working during an attack (sometimes it is the travel to work which is unmanageable).



3. Eradicating fluorescent lighting.



4. Providing computer glare guards.



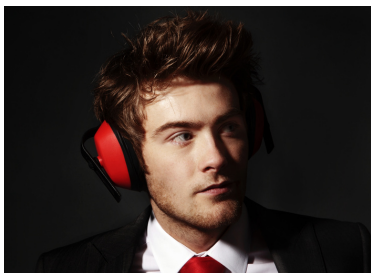
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5. Enabling reduced visual or auditory distraction e.g. providing an environmental sound machine to block out noise.



6. Allowing frequent breaks.



7. Avoiding allocation of identified trigger factors such as long working hours without regular food breaks; night working, fan heaters or flashing and flickering lights.



4. Allowing food at the workstation.



9. Keeping the worker off night shifts if these trigger migraines, even if other workers do not want to work night shifts for reasons unrelated to disability.

