

Migraine Action: *the charity for people with migraine*

Migraine Awareness Week (MAW) - 5th – 11th Sept 2010

Theme: *Migraine in the workplace*



Information sheet for journalists

About Migraine Action

Migraine Action is a national charity offering support and information to people with migraine throughout the UK. It runs a telephone helpline, hosts education days around the UK and has produced numerous resources to help children and adults with migraine. It works to raise awareness of the condition amongst employers, healthcare professionals and the general public and also funds research into its cause and treatment. Migraine Action can provide case-studies, expert spokespeople and general information to journalists.

About Migraine Awareness Week

Migraine Awareness Week (MAW) runs annually from the first Sunday of September to raise awareness and encourage those affected to seek help to manage their migraine. Each year Migraine Action also highlights one specific area, with the 2010 campaign focusing on '**Migraine in the workplace**'. Some information and statistics on the difficulties experienced by migraineurs in the workplace can be found overleaf.

Migraine Action is using Migraine Awareness Week 2010 to:

- Empower migraineurs with knowledge about how they can:
 - manage their own migraine.
 - work with their employer to ensure their migraine has minimal impact on their professional life.
 - voice their rights as employees.
- Educate employers on how they can support colleagues with migraine.
- Raise general awareness about realities of living with migraine.

Activity for the week includes:

- Migraine Action's 'Migraine Heroes Healthcare Awards 2010' luncheon (Tuesday 7th September, London): Eight category winners (nominated by migraineurs themselves) will be presented with awards. Categories include Best Employer, Best GP, Best Carer and the Young Migraineur Star award, nominated by those aged under 18 years.
- Launch of Migraine Action's new free information pack on managing migraine in the workplace for employees and employers.
- Distribution of thousands of posters and booklets on the theme of 'Migraine in the workplace'.
- 'Tackling migraine in children and young people' education day in Glasgow on Saturday 11th September led by Consultant Paediatrician, Ishaq Abu-Arafeh (Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow / Stirling Royal Infirmary).

Some general facts about migraine

- An estimated 1 in 7 people in the UK suffer from migraine making it more prevalent than diabetes, epilepsy and asthma combined.
- It affects people of all ages (even young children) of all social classes and over twice as many women as men.
- The World Health Organisation has classified migraine amongst the top 20 most disabling lifetime conditions.
- Attack can last for between 4 and 72 hours with sufferers experiencing an average of 13 attacks each year.
- Migraine is more than just a headache; the condition affects the whole body. Other symptoms can include: visual disturbances (flashing lights, blind spots in the vision etc.), nausea & vomiting, sensitivity to light, sound and smell, confusion, speech difficulties and numbness of the limbs.
- Migraine is triggered by a huge variety of factors (not just cheese, chocolate or red wine) and is very individual. For most people there is not just one trigger but a combination of factors which individually can be tolerated, but when they occur together a threshold is passed and a migraine is triggered. Stress, irregular eating and sleeping patterns and dehydration are common triggers.
- Although there is no cure for migraine there is now a wide range of effective treatments available and many migraine management techniques to help reduce its impact.

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Migraine can have a huge impact on someone's professional life



Due to increasing numbers of calls to the charity's helpline on this issue, Migraine Action has chosen 'Migraine in the workplace' as the main theme for its Migraine Awareness Week 2010 campaign. Many migraineurs experience a lack of understanding from colleagues and employers, or feel unable to take, retain or progress in a position due to their attacks:

- It is estimated that 25 million working days are lost each year due to migraine.
- Migraine is estimated to cost the UK over £1 billion per annum.
- 190,000 people will have a migraine attack in any one day.
- Many migraineurs fear losing their jobs because of their condition and for some this becomes a reality.

Migraine Action survey statistics

- A quarter of migraineurs have left a job or not taken one because of migraine.*
- Nearly three quarters of migraineurs (74%) feel judged if they have to take time off work due to their migraine.**
- 40% of migraineurs feel that their employers do not understand migraine and it makes them self conscious trying to explain their condition.*
- One in three migraineurs feel their colleagues are cynical about their migraines and believe it is 'just a headache'.*
- 30% think their colleagues and / or employer treat their migraine with cynicism.*
- Nearly one third of migraineurs (30%) feel unable to obtain or keep full-time work because of the symptoms of migraine.*

The difficulties experienced by migraineurs in the workplace are exacerbated by others who use migraine as an excuse for calling in sick, with 15% of workers in the UK admitting to using migraine as an excuse to 'pull a sickie' at work.#

Five tips for managing migraine in the workplace

1. If you are office based ensure your workstation is set up correctly to help reduce factors like bad posture and eye strain which can contribute to triggering attacks. Get up regularly, even if simply to walk a few paces, to help ease stiffness and tension.
2. Get some fresh air and exercise during breaks / lunch if possible.
3. Eat and drink sensibly: drink plenty of water, limit your intake of drinks with caffeine and eat regularly to maintain blood sugar levels throughout the day.
4. If you are light sensitive fit anti-glare filters to computers and ask your employer to fit blinds to avoid bright sunlight. Lighting should be well maintained so that lights do not flicker.
5. Arrange a meeting with your employer to discuss your condition, how you are managing it and in particular the simple ways they can help. Factors like ensuring the office is well ventilated and is maintained at a suitable temperature, that you have access to water throughout the day, and that colleagues avoid wearing strong perfume, can make all the difference.

Migraine in the workplace information pack

In September 2010 Migraine Action is launching a new 'Migraine in the workplace' information pack for people with migraine and their employers. This gives lots of practical advice on managing the condition in the workplace, tips for migraineurs and employers, and the employment rights of those affected and what they can do if they are discriminated against because of their migraine. The pack can be obtained from Migraine Action by calling 0116 275 8317, emailing info@migraine.org.uk or by visiting www.migraine.org.uk/work

Information for publication

Website: www.migraine.org.uk Migraine Action helpline: 0116 2758317 Email: info@migraine.org.uk

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* Survey conducted amongst Migraine Action members in October 2008 with 575 respondents

** Online survey conducted amongst Migraine Action members in February 2009 with 82 respondents

Survey conducted by www.yougov.co.uk (on behalf of the makers of migraine treatment Imigran Recovery) with 2,105 people interviewed 5th – 7th May 2009)