

HOW TO APPLY FOR SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INCOME



Filing for Disability with Migraine

Outside of your employer, the Federal Government offers Social Security Disability Income, or SSDI, and unfortunately, the process is more complicated than short or long-term disability through an employer.

The Social Security Administration needs to know why you are no longer employable, or why you are disabled from doing your job. Unfortunately, you cannot simply receive benefits just because you have migraine, but you actually have to prove how migraine limits your ability to function at work.

When filing for disability, you must include details about how and why the condition keeps you from doing your job. This could be because you cannot control the work environment, and things like bright lights scents, noises, or other factors are exacerbating your migraine. When requested by a doctor, employers should try to control these conditions.



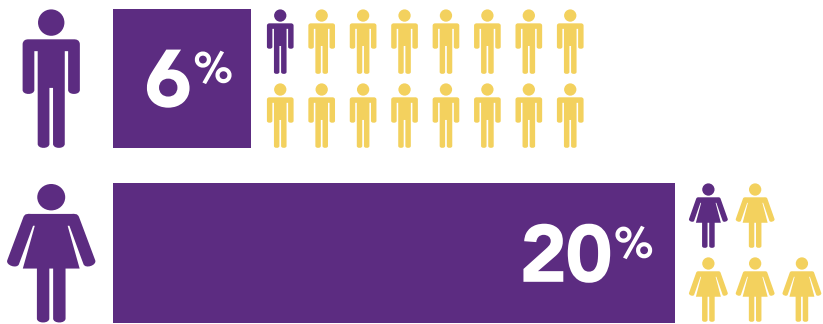
A Few Things to Keep in Mind:

- ✔ **Before applying, gather your medical records, notes from your doctor, discharge summaries from hospital stays, CT scan and MRI reports, bloodwork reports, and any notes from physical therapists or alternative treatments.** Even if you don't want to file for disability right now, start saving these records in case this becomes necessary down the road. They're your proof that your condition is chronic. Keeping well-documented records of any doctor visits, doctor notes, test results, and other medical information will greatly help you when it comes time to file for disability.
- ✔ **Get your doctor on board before you apply.** This is a very important step as he or she will have to write a note describing your condition, affirming that treatment has not alleviated it, and stating that your condition prevents you from working. Make sure you're working with a qualified and supportive doctor before applying for SSID.
- ✔ **Be as detailed as possible when describing your condition in the application.** Assume the person evaluating you for disability doesn't know anything about the impact of migraine, and detail every single symptom and how it affects your ability to work. This is not the time to downplay your condition.
- ✔ **Keep a migraine diary for a few months before applying.** Document any time you have a migraine attack and detail everything from the symptoms, duration and time of day it occurred, to how it impaired you. This can also be extremely important in helping you receive disability. It can be hard to actually prove that you've had headaches consistently over long periods of time, because there aren't doctor records for every migraine. If you keep a headache diary and record any attack you have with as much information as possible, it helps prove they've been happening regularly.



After you fill out the form, you'll receive another form that asks about your daily activities and responsibilities. Again, be as detailed as possible, and know that they're looking for substantial evidence that you need disability. Describe your job requirements and daily tasks and how migraine prevents you from accomplishing them. The Social Security Administration doesn't look at how sick you are, but instead at how unable to work you are. If you prove that you are not able to perform your job requirements at the same level you were when you were hired, then you'll have a better chance of getting approved for SSDI.

How Common is Migraine?



Filing the Paperwork

You can apply for SSDI once your condition has lasted for one full year. Every once in awhile an exception is made if a condition is expected to last for a year, but this is up to disability examiners and administrative judges. If you cannot wait a full year to apply, consider working with a disability examiner.

When you're ready to file for SSDI, fill out this online application. The application is thorough and includes your name, birth date, social security number, banking information, and medical history. You will have to include the name and contact information of a doctor, the names of your medications and who prescribed them, and names and dates of medical tests. You'll also have to include employment information like your income, employer address, list of jobs for the last 15 years, and information about your benefits. Finally, you'll attach your birth certificate, proof of U.S. citizenship, tax returns, medical records, test results, pay stubs, and award letters for any other compensation you've received. Visit this page for more information.

It is a fairly exhaustive form that is at times complicated. Set aside time over a few days to complete it. Another option is working with an advocate. Applying for Social Security Disability Income can be complex and time consuming. Patient advocates work on your behalf

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to file paperwork, talk to your doctor, and collect medical records and other information. You can find an advocate through the Patient Advocate Foundation.

Filing for disability can be a long, sometimes frustrating process, but the time off to recover and find new treatment can be both a health and career saver for migraine patients. Helpful resources to keep in mind include this Disability Planner from the Social Security Administration, more information on disability examiners, the online application form, information on patient advocates, and the AmericanMigraine Foundation.



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