

School Accommodations for Children with Migraine

How to build a migraine support team around children to ensure academic success

APPROXIMATELY 10% OF CHILDREN EXPERIENCE MIGRAINE, a headache disorder that consists of episodic head pain and several other symptoms. In children, migraine may impede their ability to focus in class, maintain school routines and thrive academically. But there are simple accommodations that can have a significant impact on a child's ability to manage their migraine and maximize their learning.

This guide outlines how healthcare providers, parents and schools can work together to keep migraine from affecting a student's education and social life:

Migraine Emergency Kit

Parents can consider building a supply kit to leave at their child's school containing everything needed in the event a migraine attack occurs at school. Some examples of possible items to include are:

Important phone numbers	Sunglasses
Hydrating drink with electrolytes	Aromatherapy
Granola bar or preferred snack	Sickness bag
Water bottle	Medications
	Eye mask Hat

3 Things Educators Should Know About Migraine

1. Migraine is a disabling disease.

More than 37 million people in the United States live with migraine, and it's the third most common disease in the world.

2. Migraine is not just a headache.

It's often accompanied by symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, insomnia, and sensitivity to light and touch. For more than 90% of those affected, migraine interferes with education, career and social activities.

3. Migraine can be managed.

While there's no cure for migraine, patients can reduce the intensity and frequency of migraine with lifestyle changes and medications. Support from parents, teachers and friends is essential for a child living with migraine.

A Student's Migraine Support Team

Potential Accommodations for Migraine Triggers

Trigger	Accommodation
Bright Light	Allow the student to wear sunglasses or a cap indoors. Switch out fluorescent bulbs for softer light.
Noisy Hallways	Allow the student to leave class five minutes early or arrive five minutes late so that they can regroup in a dark environment and avoid the noise and stress of a school hallway in-between classes. Let them wear earplugs for events where a high noise level, such as pep rallies, is anticipated.
Dehydration	Ensure that the student has a water bottle on their desk at all times and can leave class to fill it up whenever necessary.
Hunger	Allow the child to snack whenever necessary. Send home a school lunch menu so food can be sent on days that children are unlikely to eat the provided meal.
Computer Screens	Allow the student to lower their computer's brightness setting or take breaks from the work as needed, with extra time to make up the assignment.
Physical Exertion	Allow the student to take breaks from gym class, if needed. Explore less intense exercises and routines that the student can perform instead.

Health Care Provider

Your child's doctor or neurologist can help care for your child in school by writing a letter of support including their diagnosis and associated symptoms. This letter can help guide conversations with educators and give them something to refer to on a regular basis. If applicable, your doctor can outline several courses of action in case of a migraine attack—such as taking over-the-counter or prescribed medications—to help inform their care while on school grounds. Doctors can also help by requesting appropriate accommodations at school to help children manage their migraine symptoms.

School Nurse

At school, the nurse is the most important medical point of contact for your child. Nurses can help children with migraine by setting up a cool, dark room to recover. This can also be accomplished by getting more familiar with the disease and its debilitating symptoms, as well as a child's specific diagnosis.

[The American Migraine Foundation's resource library](#) is a great place to start. School nurses are likely to be the person at the school helping to ensure that the treatment plan outlined by your child's doctor is being followed during a migraine attack.

Teachers

Since students spend most of their school day in the classroom, their teachers are most-able to make accommodations for children experiencing a migraine attack. Whether it's by letting them wear sunglasses or a cap indoors, or allowing them to take breaks from computer work, teachers should let students know that they're there for them—and willing to find ways to accommodate their triggers and help them learn.

Parents

Parents are key to educating teachers and school support staff about their child's diagnosis, but a lot can be done at home to help children better advocate for themselves. Whenever possible, validate their migraine, teach them how to describe their pain and advocate for the care they deserve.

While migraine can be debilitating, the goal should be for children to learn how to manage their pain and minimize disruptions to their education. Promoting healthy pain-coping behaviors from a young age is especially helpful since migraine can be a lifelong disease. For more information about pediatric migraine and treatments, visit the [American Migraine Foundation resource library](#). For help finding a specialist in your area, check out the [AMF Find a Doctor tool](#).

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