

# School Accommodations for Children Living With Migraine

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

**Approximately 10% of children live with 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.



## 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
- Hydrating drink with electrolytes
- Granola bar or preferred snack
- Water bottle
- Sunglasses
- Aromatherapy
- Sickness bag
- Medications
- Eye mask
- Ear plugs
- Hat

## 3 Things Educators Should Know About Migraine

### 1. Migraine is a disabling disease.

More than 40 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 sound. 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 attacks 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

## Healthcare 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 living 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. If your child's school does not have a nurse on site, school administrators can often support the child in finding a dark, quiet place to rest during attacks and supporting your child in taking their migraine medications when needed.

## Teachers

Since students spend most of their school day in the classroom, their teachers are the most able to make accommodations for children experiencing a migraine attack. Whether it's by letting them wear sunglasses 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 and 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, minimize disruptions to their education, and develop coping and treatment strategies that allow them to attend school consistently. Promoting healthy pain-coping behaviors from a young age is especially helpful, since migraine is a lifelong disease. Find more information about pediatric migraine and treatments at [americanmigrainefoundation.org](http://americanmigrainefoundation.org).

## Potential Accommodations for Migraine Triggers

Trigger	Accommodation
<b>Bright Light</b>	Allow the student to wear sunglasses during attacks. Switch out fluorescent bulbs for softer light.
<b>Noisy Hallways</b>	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.
<b>Dehydration</b>	Ensure that the student has a water bottle on their desk at all times and can leave class to fill it up whenever necessary.
<b>Hunger</b>	Allow the child to snack whenever necessary.
<b>Computer Screens</b>	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.
<b>Physical Exertion</b>	Allow the student to take breaks from gym, if needed. Explore less intense exercises and routines that the student can perform instead.

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FOUNDATION

The mission of the American Migraine Foundation is to mobilize a community for patient support and advocacy, as well as drive and support impactful research that translates into advances for patients with migraine and other disabling diseases that cause severe head pain. Visit [americanmigrainefoundation.org](http://americanmigrainefoundation.org) for more resources for people living with migraine and their supporters.

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