



# Access to **Migraine** Treatment During **COVID-19**





More than **1 in 10** women, men and children in the United States live with migraine disease. How does the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic impact their health and ability to receive optimal care?

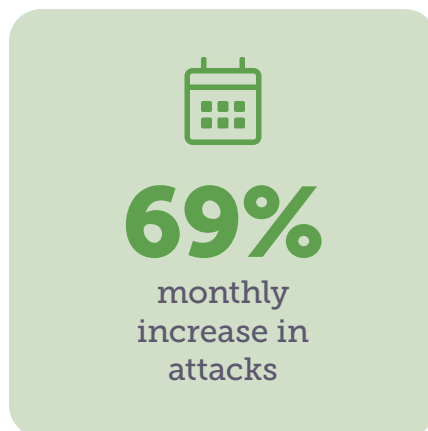
To explore this question, The Headache and Migraine Policy Forum, in partnership with Migraine Again, conducted a national survey of more than 1,000 migraine patients throughout the United States. Respondents agreed overwhelmingly that COVID-19 has made it difficult to access treatment. The survey also revealed clear opinions about the debilitating impact of migraine disease, as well as the need for health insurers and policymakers to better meet the needs of people living with the disease.



# Key Findings

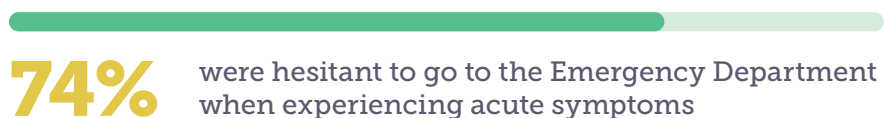
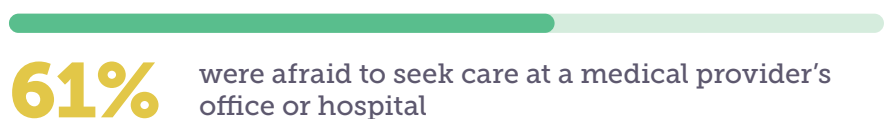
Treating a debilitating condition like migraine disease during a global pandemic can increase stress for patients, many of whom already struggle with day-to-day activities. Added stress can mean more frequent attacks, resulting in more visits to see a health care provider or even costly ER visits.

Respondents reported that, during the pandemic, they experienced:



Since the beginning of the pandemic, many patients have been hesitant or afraid to seek care.

**However,** those fears **didn't** **stop** them from receiving treatment.







# Policy Flexibility

To facilitate care during the pandemic, some insurers suspended access barriers like prior authorization and step therapy during COVID-19. However, survey input suggests that insurers were not as flexible as patients would have preferred when it came to care for migraine disease.

## Respondents overwhelmingly **disagreed** that insurers:

Made access to medication easier by reducing barriers like prior authorization



**70%**  
**DISAGREE**

Stopped requiring step therapy



**76%**  
**DISAGREE**

Allowed them to get more of their medication per pharmacy fill



**73%**  
**DISAGREE**

Waved the co-pay payment for telemedicine visits



**61%**  
**DISAGREE**



**72%** had difficulty managing their migraine because they couldn't get a longer supply of medication.

# Telemedicine & Migraine Care

Telemedicine allows health care providers to visit with patients via phone or computer. The use of telemedicine has significantly increased since the start of the pandemic, perhaps in part because more health plans have begun reimbursing health care providers for virtual visits.

## Before COVID-19

**22%**  
of patients used telemedicine **before** the start of the pandemic



## After COVID-19

**78%**  
of patients used telemedicine **after** the start of the pandemic



Respondents agreed insurers could do more to **protect telemedicine** use.



**73%** would use telemedicine in the future if insurers dropped co-pay requirements



**83%** hope their health care provider continues telemedicine after COVID-19

Telemedicine has helped bridge the gap of access to care, though most patients recognize it as a supplement, **not** a replacement, to in-person care.



**66%** agreed telemedicine allowed them to keep a medical appointment they would have otherwise canceled because of COVID-19



**75%** need in-person visits along with a telemedicine visit



# Migraine in the Workplace

Migraine attacks' intensity and unpredictability can affect work life. In fact, migraine is the 10th leading cause of overall disability in the United States. Triggers for migraine attacks during COVID-19 can be even more prevalent as isolation due to social distancing is taking place and many patients face lack of work and homelife balance.

Respondents' demographic information underscored the reality that, for many people, the burden of migraine disease makes it impossible to maintain full-time employment.



Only about **1/3** of migraine patients are able to work full time.



# Conclusion

Survey findings confirm that the challenges of living with and treating migraine disease are compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. To encourage continued treatment for patients who struggle with debilitating pain, access to care and worry about virus exposure, **policymakers could consider:**



Suspending access barriers to treatment

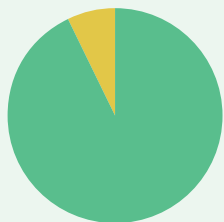


Reducing patients' cost-sharing burdens



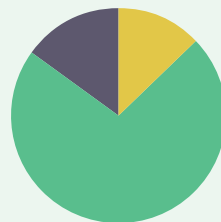
Expanding telemedicine beyond COVID-19

## Demographics



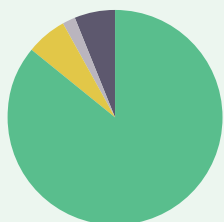
### Gender

- **91%** Women
- **7%** Men



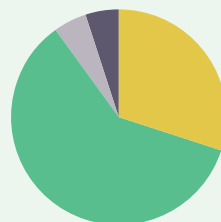
### Age

- **13%** Under 35
- **72%** 36-64
- **14%** Over 65



### Ethnicity

- **86%** White or Caucasian
- **5%** Hispanic or Latino American
- **2%** Asian
- **5%** Other



### Insurance

- **30%** Medicaid & Medicare
- **60%** Commercial Insurance
- **5%** Other
- **5%** No Insurance



The Headache & Migraine Policy Forum advances public policies and practices that promote accelerated innovation and improved treatments for persons living with headache disorders and migraine disease.

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Migraine Again is an authentic online wellness community for people with migraine and frequent headaches.

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