

Shining a Light on Migraine

The Migraine Association of Ireland recently created a survey with the aim to gain an understanding of how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected migraine sufferers.



The survey shines a light on the impact that pandemic restrictions are having on migraine sufferers in Ireland.

Conducted to coincide with Migraine Awareness Week (September 6th – 12th), the survey was carried out online among 120 adults living with migraine in Ireland. The survey shows that 56% of respondents were getting more frequent migraines, with 69% of this group reporting their symptoms of migraine have become more severe since the pandemic

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Beaumont Hospital & Hermitage Medical Clinic

began. 34% of respondents were in the 35-44 age group; 40% in the 45-54 age group and the remaining 26% in the 18-24 (3%), 25-34 (17%), and 55-65+ (6%) age group(s).

Of those respondents who said their migraine had become more frequent, over four-fifths, or 84%, said that this was due to stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Other factors for triggering a moderate to severe increase in migraines included changes to their routine (67%), a lack of sleep (63%) and increased screen time (60%).

The survey also found that among the individuals who were experiencing more frequent migraines, over one-third (37%) were working from home, 21% said that their working hours had increased during the pandemic and 20% were no longer working.

A small number of respondents, 18%, reported a decrease in the frequency of their migraines since the introduction of the COVID-19 restrictions. Similarly, 13% of respondents reported a decrease in the severity of their migraines.

With regard to the availability of appointments with healthcare professionals, 52% of

respondents to the survey said that their appointments were either cancelled or postponed since the start of the pandemic. almost half (49%) of all respondents who experienced an increase in migraines reported cancelled or postponed appointments.

While only 41% of all respondents have had a virtual health-related consultation since the pandemic began, most of this group (68%) rated their consultation as either 'good' or 'excellent'.

Dr Martin Rutledge, Consultant Neurologist, Beaumont Hospital & Hermitage Medical Clinic said, "It's worrying that the survey shows that many migraine sufferers are either experiencing more severe or frequent migraines. However, it is not unexpected, as we know that stress is a very common exacerbating factor in this condition, and it has been a very stressful period for everybody over the last 4-5 months with the Covid pandemic. Migraine, especially the more chronic forms, can be a very disabling neurological disorder, and the worldwide uncertainty in recent months has only made the situation worse. Patients should seek advice from their primary care doctors and other healthcare professionals if they are struggling. We are still having face to face and virtual consultations in our migraine clinic, and many GP's are reviewing their patients regularly, both in person and by phone. There are effective treatments available for many migraine sufferers and we are still available for our patients."