

# Back-to-School Checklist for High School Age Children (12 – 18 years)

Summer vacation is ending, and it's time to prepare for the next school year. For children with migraine, this can be challenging. What can you do to set your child up for a successful school year? This checklist provides key actions to prepare your child and school staff. Plan in advance! These checklist items are completed in the weeks BEFORE school begins.

\*If your child is starting at a **new school**, please see below for further suggestions on a meeting to take place in June before the school year starts.

NOTE: Migraine protocol needs to be adhered to by both the student AND the teacher/staff. The importance of taking preventative steps immediately to prevent a full-blown migraine needs to be understood by school staff

## Early summer (June/ early July):

- Schedule an appointment with your child's healthcare provider for mid-summer. This appointment will be to review the treatment plan, refill your child's prescription, and get any forms signed.
- Schedule a meeting with the school principal and/or guidance counsellor for either the week before school starts or the first week of school. Most staff are back in the school the week before to prepare.
- Most high school students have several teachers. You may also want to meet with each teacher individually at the start of school rather than waiting until the first parent-teacher interview.

Identify the one school staff member (i.e. the guidance counsellor) who will be the liaison for the family. This person can follow the student as they progress through the grades and facilitate meetings/supply storage/proper filling of forms. They also have access to advise staff of your child's migraine.



## Mid-Summer (early-mid August):

- Attend the doctor's appointment
  - Write down any changes in your child's migraine attacks including response to medications, new symptoms and changes in frequency/intensity, etc. Have your Medical Note form signed (Form templates are here: <https://migrainecanada.org/pediatrics-adolescents/> ) and any other required paperwork
- Refill medications. Keep them in the original bottle with instructions that match what the doctor has provided on a medical form.
- If migraine is new to your child, begin discussing how to talk to teachers about his/her migraine attacks and what to do if a migraine happens at school (i.e. tell the teacher right away).
- Discuss preventative actions, such as the importance of keeping their water bottle filled so they can be hydrated throughout the day.
- Encourage your child to get into a school routine (ie. sleep/wake schedule, nutrition, etc.).
- Talk with your child about anything he/she may be nervous or scared about.

Build a **Migraine Emergency Kit** to have at school. This can be in the student's locker or kept in their knapsack and can include items such as:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> water bottle   | <input type="checkbox"/> blanket                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> electrolyte tablets or drink                         | <input type="checkbox"/> eye mask                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bucket to throw up in                                | <input type="checkbox"/> sunglasses                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> rescue medications (in the original labelled bottle) | <input type="checkbox"/> ear plugs                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gravol   | <input type="checkbox"/> hoodie to cover his/her head |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> ice pack                     |



## One week before school starts:

- Meet with the school (principal and/or guidance counsellor) to discuss your child's disorder, the treatment plan and accommodations. At the meeting:
  - Provide a fact sheet on migraine and all required forms from the doctor's office.
  - Confirm everyone is familiar with the agreed protocol (i.e. the importance of prompt preventative measures at the first sign of migraine to help prevent a full-blown attack). It is never appropriate to ignore or diminish migraine symptoms.
  - Bring a list of symptoms your child regularly experiences before and during an attack.
  - Discuss and come to an agreement of what can be done at the school with respect to accommodations and medication administration.
    - If you are not satisfied and/or have any concerns with the accommodations that will be provided, you will need to escalate your issues and advocate for your child.
  - Confirm a visual sign that your child can use to signal to the teacher that they need to leave the classroom due to nausea. Oral approval to leave the classroom should not be required.
  - Bring the Migraine Emergency Kit with you (or a list of the kit's contents).
    - Decide the kit's location and how your child can access it. For example, ice packs can be stored in the staff room freezer (who and how it is retrieved should be decided). The remaining kit items will likely be kept in your child's locker for them to self-administer.
  - Use this time at the school to familiarize your child with any changes (i.e. discuss new classes, new bus route, etc.).
- Encourage your child to continue with the school routine
- Your high school age child will likely know what they can or can't eat (what triggers an attack) and the importance of hydration. Plan a snack and lunch menu. Discuss with your child the order the food should be eaten, how often, and what liquids they should drink.
  - If the school provides lunch, familiarize yourself with the process and menu options.
- Continue to check in with your child to discuss anything he/she may be worried about and reassure them that everything is in place for a successful school year. Likely knowing that teachers are aware of his/her condition and will be accommodating will be helpful to your child.



## Additional actions if starting a new school:

- Meet with the new school administrators and/or guidance counsellor in June (before the previous school year ends) to discuss your child's migraine and the accommodations provided at the previous school. At the meeting:
  - Provide a fact sheet on pediatric migraine.
  - Agree on school accommodations for your child and medication administration.
  - Familiarize your child with the building and how to navigate it (i.e. front office and principal's office, locker location, etc.). This can help reduce any anxiety and fears about starting a new school.
- If you have any concerns with the accommodations that will be provided, escalate your issues to the School Board over the summer.



## Appropriate accommodations to request to ensure a successful school year:

- Deadline flexibility, extended periods of time for tests, and a quiet space during the school day to rest.
- If a student misses school, they are supported to catch up at their own pace. Parents can consider a tutor to help their child keep up if necessary.
- Speak openly with the teacher about strategies for getting homework done (in terms of when they are less likely to have a migraine).
- If participating in physical fitness isn't possible, alternative assignments are provided. (ie. research, write a short essay or story, etc).
- If school gatherings (like an assembly) are too much stimulation, the student should be allowed to go to a quiet area and read a book or do homework.
- Most high school students will have a cell phone and will directly message their parent(s). It is important to discuss cell phone etiquette by both parents and students and the importance of keeping the teacher in the loop during such communication. The student should quietly tell the teacher they feel a migraine coming on and request to use their cell phone in the hall or a location in the classroom acceptable to the teacher.



*Migraine Canada is committed to improving the lives of those living with migraine. This checklist is intended as general recommendations only and does not replace advice from your healthcare provider.*