

Veterans More Likely to Suffer from Migraine Disease

National Migraine and Headache Awareness Month in June focuses on migraine, considered to be an ‘underdiagnosed’ chronic disease

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Due to the invisible nature, migraine and headache disease can remain in the shadows when it comes to awareness, treatment and research.

“Whether civilian or military, this is an under-diagnosed, under-treated, under-funded disease that has such a disabling impact on so many lives,” said Susan Lane Stone, CEO and executive director of the National Headache Foundation. “This is a chronic disease, and today there is no cure.”

National Migraine and Headache Awareness Month, which takes place during June, was developed to shine a light on this chronic neurologic disease with the National Headache Foundation and the Coalition of Headache and Migraine Patients (CHAMP) collaborating on the annual recognition. This year’s theme is “Path to Better Days” with the event seeking to enhance awareness for a mainstream audience.

“For 2025, we will focus on people recognizing the symptoms they might be experiencing,” Stone said. “And if these resonate, then maybe beyond searching on Google — recognition that something more is going on, and they deserve to learn more and should seek a dedicated headache appointment with their primary care provider.”

Both symptoms and any contributing factors or triggers are a good place to start, she added.

“No one wants to admit that they can’t cope,” Stone said. “So many are told that it isn’t real, that they can power through or tough it out. But that’s not the best pathway.”

Among veterans, approximately 36.9 percent reported a history of migraines, according to the National Headache Foundation, compared to 12.7 percent of non-veterans.

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“Veterans with migraine also reported significantly worse general health, more pain and had a higher reported prevalence of neurological and psychiatric conditions,” Stone said, “with a noted association to specific environmental exposures during military service.”

This year’s Migraine and Headache Awareness Month includes a special commemoration with the installation of thousands of flags at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to symbolize the impact of headache and migraine. The effort is led by the Alliance for Headache Disorders Advocacy and will include around 30,000 flags, Stone said, to be displayed June 1-14. The design incorporates 25,000 purple flags – the official headache awareness color – as well as 5,000 U.S. flags interspersed to connect the display to the military community.

“About 42 million people are impacted in the United States with headache disorders,” she said, “of which about 6.8 million of those are veterans.”

Stone added that the National Headache Foundation leads headache community interactions with the military population and is proud to showcase Operation Brainstorm.org during this event. Operation Brainstorm is the Foundation’s health resource initiative developed for veterans, active-duty military and loved ones living with migraine disease and headache disorders. It includes online education and awareness with navigation to a care hub featuring tools and resources customized for military personnel and veterans.

“Our veterans and family deserve to get the care they need and get as many symptom-free or reduced-symptom days back as possible,” Stone said.

For more information about the National Headache Foundation and Operation Brainstorm, visit <https://www.operationbrainstorm.org>.

This article is featured in the May/June 2025 issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by Janice Phelan, a freelance writer based in Lee’s Summit, Missouri.