

# Advocates Call for Adding Migraine Screening to Well-Woman Visit

Michelle Winokur, DrPH

The Alliance for Patient Access ([allianceforpatientaccess.org](http://allianceforpatientaccess.org)), founded in 2006, is a national network of physicians dedicated to ensuring patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care. AfPA accomplishes this mission by recruiting, training and mobilizing policy-minded physicians to be effective advocates for patient access. AfPA is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(4) corporation and headed by an independent board of directors. Its physician leadership is supported by policy advocacy management and public affairs consultants. In 2012, AfPA established the Institute for Patient Access (IfPA), a related 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. In keeping with its mission to promote a better understanding of the benefits of the physician-patient relationship in the provision of quality healthcare, IfPA sponsors policy research and educational programming.



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## Updating the Well-Women Chart:

The Women’s Preventive Services Initiative is the lead agency

responsible for outlining screening recommendations for women by age range – from 13-17 years old to over 75. The organization annually updates the [Well-Women Chart](#), (2) which includes screening recommendations for topics ranging from alcohol use and contraceptive care to infectious diseases and certain cancers.

Despite the range of conditions included, neither headache nor migraine is on the chart. [The Headache and Migraine Policy Forum](#) is among the advocacy organizations working to change that. (3)

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## Migraine Burden and Chronification:

Migraine disease and headache disorders affect nearly [40 million Americans](#). (4) The conditions are widespread yet still widely underdiagnosed. Migraine also disproportionately affects women and is known to peak during prime working years – from 25 to 55.

Migraine is the [second most](#) disabling disease in the world, after lower back pain. (5) Without proper treatment, migraine can become chronic, meaning the more migraines a person has, the more vulnerable they are to having more.

## The Cost of Migraine Disease:

Migraine is also costly. Migraine causes more than [1.2 million visits](#) to emergency departments each year. (6) The painful and sometimes sudden symptoms also cause a loss in work productivity and daily activities.

And, like a ripple in the water, the impact of a woman’s migraine extends to her family, workplace, and community. In contrast, diagnosing migraines earlier can help prevent costly [emergency department visits](#), lessen chronic pain and retain women in the workforce. (7)

Adding migraine screening to the Well-Women Chart is a great way to acknowledge – and is a first step toward addressing – a

condition that continues to disable too many women.

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