



## WORKPLACE ISSUES

### **To share or not to share your vestibular disorder in the workplace?**

- What is the company's philosophy around disability? Does a disability policy exist? Is it discussed in the Employee Handbook? Does disability insurance exist, short-term and/or long-term?
- Is it a kind work culture with flexible schedules, job sharing, work from home one day per week, etc.? This usually gives some insight as to how a company may be able to accommodate a person with disabilities.
- Does the company have a Human Resources Department? Smaller companies often outsource their human resources department and an employee may not have as much protection if his/her manager does not want to accommodate his/her disability.
- Request a letter of disability from a vestibular trained healthcare professional, should it be needed.

### **What are some common accommodations?**

- Better direct lighting; less/no fluorescent lighting.
- Relocating the workspace so that it doesn't have a view of window blinds, patterned carpet, ceiling fans, and the busiest aisle with people walking back and forth; and isn't exposed to loud noises.
- The need for more frequent breaks.
- If the job requires standing at a counter, sitting in a high chair.
- Possibly shifting some work to certain times of the day when concentration levels are highest.

### **Why is an accommodation needed, especially for desk jobs?**

- In a workplace that requires less physical stamina and more cognitive stamina, it can be difficult to explain why an accommodation is needed for symptoms of dizziness, unsteadiness, etc. Provide information from an authoritative source, such as the Vestibular Disorders Association (VEDA). Explaining some of the cognitive impairments might be helpful, such as poor concentration, memory, and word recall. However, there is a fine line in

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disclosing some of these cognitive impacts without possibly appearing unqualified for the position. This level of detail should only be shared with the most supportive of workplaces.

- Explain that a person doesn't have to be standing to feel the symptoms of a vestibular disorder. A person can have symptoms while sitting at a desk.

**If workplace accommodations are not sufficient, what Federal legal protection does a person have when taking an extended medical leave from work?**

- Understand your rights under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Employees are eligible to take FMLA leave if they have worked for their employer for at least **12** months, and have worked for at least 1,250 hours over the previous **12** months, and work at a location where at least **50 employees** are employed by the employer within 75 miles. Source: <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/1421.htm>
- Hire an employment lawyer to understand your rights under the FMLA if you believe your firm may not grant a medical leave.