

— FWD ASSIST HQ —

FIELD GUIDE

Filing a Migraine Claim

File a complete migraine claim and document your prostrating attacks.



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A FWD Assist HQ Field Guide

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This guide is education, not representation. It explains how part of the VA system works so you can handle your own business with confidence. It is not legal or claims advice, and reading it does not create any representative relationship between you and the author. The author is not affiliated with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and nothing here is endorsed by the VA.

This guide prints no live VA dollar figures and no rating percentages on purpose, because they change. Before you make a decision based on any number, check the current figure at va.gov. No book can promise you a rating; the evidence in your file decides the result. Help from an accredited Veterans Service Officer is always free.

In crisis? Call the **Veterans Crisis Line**: dial **988**, then press **1**. You can also text **838255** or chat online at veteranscrisisline.net. It is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

Filing a Migraine Claim

File a complete migraine claim and document your prostrating attacks.

Companion to *The VA Migraine Claims Playbook*.

This is general education, not legal or claims advice, and not guidance for your specific claim. It cannot promise you a rating or an outcome, and no one can. For help with your own claim, see a free accredited representative (see [the back of this guide](#)). Nothing here creates a representative relationship.

Current as of October 2026. Rules, forms, and figures change. Check current details at va.gov.

THE BEST WAY TO USE THIS GUIDE

The strongest position is to be your own informed advocate and to work with a free accredited representative. An accredited Veterans Service Organization, such as the DAV, VFW, American Legion, or a county or state veterans office, helps at no charge. Accredited claims agents and attorneys can help too. They can't charge for work done before VA issues its initial decision on your claim, and after that they may charge a fee within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. This guide is here so you understand your own situation and can work with them as a full partner instead of handing it over blind. If you'd rather handle this yourself, and you're comfortable doing that, the guide walks you through every step. Either way, you stay in control.

The Outcome and What You Need Before You Start

The outcome: By the end of this guide you'll understand how VA rates migraines under Diagnostic Code 8100, keep a headache log that shows how often attacks come and what they do to you, gather your supporting evidence, and file a complete, well-organized migraine claim.

This guide prepares you for the task. It doesn't and can't promise a rating, a percentage, or an outcome. The evidence in your file decides the result.

WHAT YOU NEED BEFORE YOU START

- ☐ A copy of Diagnostic Code 8100 from 38 CFR 4.124a. Print it; you'll come back to it.
- ☐ A phone or notebook to start a headache log today.
- ☐ A list of any service-connected conditions you already have (for example TBI, PTSD, or a neck injury).
- ☐ Access to va.gov and, ideally, a free accredited representative.
- ☐ Upcoming provider appointments where you can describe your attacks.

When to start: Today. Start the headache log now and file the Intent to File the same day. You'll then have one year to file the complete claim, and VA treats it as filed on the Intent to File date.

Start Here: The Basics

Migraines are more than bad headaches, and VA rates them as their own condition. The rating turns on how often you have prostrating attacks over the last several months and, at the top level, whether very frequent, completely prostrating, prolonged attacks are productive of severe economic inadaptability. Because migraines come and go, a headache log and steady treatment records matter. You need a current diagnosis, a link to service, direct or secondary, and evidence of how often and how hard the attacks hit. This guide prints no percentages.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 4.124a, Diagnostic Code 8100.

The Steps

STEP 1

Learn what "prostrating" means and read the text of DC 8100.

DC 8100 looks at how often attacks come, whether they're "characteristic prostrating attacks," and at the top level whether they're "productive of severe economic inadaptability." The schedule doesn't define prostrating. In plain terms, it's an attack that lays you low and leaves you without the strength to keep going, so you usually have to stop and lie down.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 4.124a, Diagnostic Code 8100.

Done when you can say, in your own words, what a prostrating attack is and how DC 8100 looks at frequency and severity.

STEP 2

Pick your path to service connection: direct or secondary.

Direct means your migraines trace to something in service, like a head injury or an exposure. Secondary means a condition VA already service connected, such as a TBI, PTSD, or a neck condition, caused them or made them worse.

If your migraines began in service or after an in-service injury, plan a direct claim. **If** you have a service-connected condition that caused them, plan a secondary claim. **If** you had migraines before and a service-connected condition made them worse, that's aggravation, and your provider should describe how bad they were before. You can claim more than one path. **If** the path isn't clear, ask a free accredited representative.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.303; 38 CFR § 3.310(a) and (b).

Done when you've named the path, or paths, that fit your history.

STEP 3

File an Intent to File to protect your start date.

Submit it online at va.gov/resources/your-intent-to-file-a-va-claim, call 1-800-827-1000, mail VA Form 21-0966, or go through an accredited representative. You then have one year to file the complete claim.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.155(b).

Done when your Intent to File is on record and you have the confirmation.

STEP 4

Start your headache log today and record six things for every attack.

For each attack write: the date; when it started and ended; how many hours it lasted; how bad it was on a 1 to 10 scale you use the same way each time; whether you had to stop and lie down (Y or N); and what it did to work (hours or days missed, or "worked through it"). Log every attack, mild ones too, the day it happens.

Do not fill in weeks of entries after the fact and present them as a daily log. If you're describing past attacks from memory, say so in a separate statement.

Done when you have a running log with all six items for each attack.

STEP 5

Add a monthly summary and keep the log going.

At the end of each month, total your attacks, the ones that made you lie down, hours lost, work days missed, and any urgent care or ER visits. DC 8100 looks at the average over the last several months, so a log that covers several months shows the pattern.

If your frequency changes month to month, report the range and the average (for example "12 to 18 a month, about 15 on average"). **If** your Intent to File year is running out, file with the log you have and keep logging. You can send more later.

Done when you have several months of entries, each with a monthly summary, or you've filed and are still logging.

STEP 6

Get a medical opinion linking your migraines to service, or know VA will.

VA usually gets an opinion at the C&P exam. You can also ask your own provider, ideally a neurologist, for a letter. A useful one names the diagnosis, explains the reasoning, and says whether the migraines are "at least as likely as not" related to the in-service event, or caused or made worse by the service-connected condition. A one-page summary of your service history helps the provider.

If your provider will write it, ask whether there's a charge. **If** they decline, ask your accredited representative what to do next before paying for an outside opinion.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.159(c)(4); 38 CFR § 3.102.

Done when you hold a reasoned opinion, or you know VA will get one at the exam.

STEP 7

Tell your providers what the attacks do to you.

Bring your log to appointments and ask your provider to review it. Describe plainly what a typical attack forces you to do: stop working, lie down in a dark room, miss the rest of the day. That way the clinical notes record how often attacks come, how long they last, and what they cost you.

Do not ask a provider to write particular words. Describe your attacks accurately and let the provider record what they find.

Done when your provider has seen your log and your records describe how often the attacks come and what they make you do.

STEP 8

Document what the attacks do to your work.

The top DC 8100 level asks whether the attacks are productive of severe economic inadaptability, so work impact is key evidence. Gather the facts: days missed with real numbers, reduced hours, job changes, or accommodations. An employer letter confirming sick days used for migraines helps. You don't have to have lost a job.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 4.124a, Diagnostic Code 8100.

Done when your missed work is written down in numbers, ideally backed by an employer letter.

STEP 9

Prepare for the C&P exam.

The examiner asks how often attacks come, what they're like, and what they keep you from doing. Review your log so your answers match it, and bring it. You can offer it: "I've kept a headache log. Would you like to see it?" Describe your attacks as they really are, including how often the bad ones come and how long they last. Don't play them down, and don't stretch them.

Do not walk in without your log. The examiner records what you say, and VA gives the report a lot of weight.

Done when you've reviewed your numbers and packed your log.

STEP 10

Put the claim package together and submit it.

File VA Form 21-526EZ online at va.gov, through an accredited representative, or by mail to Department of Veterans Affairs, Claims Intake Center, PO Box 4444, Janesville, WI 53547-4444. Attach your evidence as separate, labeled files. Turn the headache log into a clean PDF with a cover page (your name, VA file number, the dates covered, and the totals) and label it, for example "HEADACHE LOG: [month] to [month]." Add any opinion and employer letter.

Done when your claim is submitted with the log, any opinion, and your other evidence as labeled files.

STEP 11

Claim any secondary paths at the same time.

If you have a service-connected TBI, PTSD, or neck condition that may have caused your migraines, name it on the claim as the condition the migraines are secondary to. Any opinion should explain that link.

If the underlying condition is already service connected, claim the secondary path now. **If** it's still pending, claim both together or talk to an accredited representative about timing.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.310(a) and (b).

Done when every secondary path is claimed or set aside for a stated reason.

STEP 12

Read the decision and know your next-move options.

Compare what the rater found on frequency, prostrating attacks, and work impact against DC 8100 and your evidence. Keep logging; any later claim for an increase rests on it.

If the decision reflects your evidence, keep your log current. **If** you have new evidence, file a Supplemental Claim (VA Form 20-0995). **If** you think VA made an error on the same evidence, ask for a Higher-Level Review (VA Form 20-0996), or file a Board Appeal (VA Form 10182). Do it within one year of the decision to keep your start date. A free accredited representative can help you choose.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.2500; 38 CFR § 3.2501; 38 CFR § 3.2601.

Done when you understand the decision and have accepted it or chosen a next step.

Recap Checklist

- ☐ I can explain a prostrating attack and have read DC 8100 (38 CFR 4.124a).
- ☐ I picked my path: direct, secondary, or both.
- ☐ I filed an Intent to File and saved the confirmation.
- ☐ I started a headache log with all six items per attack.
- ☐ I add a monthly summary and keep the log going.
- ☐ I have a reasoned medical opinion, or know VA will get one.
- ☐ My providers have seen my log and my records describe my attacks.
- ☐ I documented missed work, ideally with an employer letter.
- ☐ I reviewed my log for the C&P exam and packed it.
- ☐ I submitted the claim with the log and evidence as labeled files.
- ☐ I claimed any secondary paths at the same time.
- ☐ I read the decision and accepted it or chose a next step.

Reminder: rules and rates change. Check any current figure at [va.gov](https://www.va.gov). Help from an accredited Veterans Service Organization is free. Accredited claims agents and attorneys can't charge for work done before VA issues its initial decision on your claim. After that, they may charge a fee within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. This guide prepared you for the task. The evidence in your file decides the result.

Get Free, Accredited Help

For anything about your own claim, talk to an accredited representative. Help from an accredited Veterans Service Organization is free. Accredited claims agents and attorneys can't charge for work done before VA issues its initial decision on your claim. After that, they may charge a fee within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. Free help is available through Veterans Service Organizations such as the DAV, VFW, and American Legion, and through county and state veterans offices.

To find one near you, visit va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative. Representation begins only when you sign VA Form 21-22 (for a Veterans Service Organization) or 21-22a (for an individual agent or attorney). With one rare exception for a single unpaid case, only accredited people can represent you before the VA, and only an accredited agent or attorney can charge you a fee. Nothing in this guide creates that relationship.

A warning about claim sharks. Anyone who offers to file your initial claim for a fee, or who guarantees you a rating or a percentage, is selling something you shouldn't buy. Accredited Veterans Service Organizations help at no charge, and accredited claims agents and attorneys may charge only after VA issues its initial decision, within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. Report predatory companies to the VA Office of Inspector General at 1-800-488-8244.

Keep Going: The Full Guide

This field guide is the short, do-this-now companion to the book *The VA Migraine Claims Playbook*. See every FWD Assist HQ title that is out now at fwdassisthq.com/books.

Current as of October 2026. Rules, forms, and figures change. Check current details at va.gov.

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J. Erickson is a service-disabled Air Force veteran. He served as a military firefighter and as a veteran service officer, where he spent years walking veterans through the same claims process he writes about now. He holds an MBA and writes plain-language guides for veterans who want to understand the system without a translator.

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