

**Practice Areas**

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY  
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**Blogs**

[www.msdisability.net](http://www.msdisability.net)  
[www.migrainedisability.net](http://www.migrainedisability.net)  
[www.ssdanswers.com](http://www.ssdanswers.com)

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**Migraine Headaches and the Workplace** – as seen on [www.migrainedisability.net](http://www.migrainedisability.net)

Clients suffering from disabling migraines often mention an intolerance of perfumes and other scents – i.e., aftershaves, perfumes, and other strong scents actually trigger migraine headaches. If you are working through your migraines, it can be difficult to bring the issue up to your employer. Many people are concerned that they will be viewed as a complainer, told to put up with it, or brushed off with an explanation that no one can control other workers' freedom to wear scented products.

Fairly recently, a federal court considered the case of Susan McBride, an employee of the City of Detroit suing under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for the City's failure to accommodate her extreme chemical sensitivity with a no perfume policy. Ms. McBride claimed that her coworkers' perfume caused her to become ill, miss work, and require medical treatment. Her employer refused to recognize her chemical sensitivity as a disability and failed to provide accommodations. The Court held that Ms. McBride presented a sufficient case for a disability within the meaning of the ADA and that a no perfume policy would have been a reasonable accommodation.

While this case did not deal with migraines specifically, it is noteworthy in that it opens the door to cases brought by individuals suffering from migraines triggered by chemical sensitivities and may increase awareness of the disabling effect migraines can have in the work environment.

If your migraines are triggered by environmental factors such as strong scents in the workplace, make sure you mention it to your doctor so that it appears in your medical record. Medical documentation will make or break a disability claim based on migraine headaches, so you should ensure that your medical providers have a complete picture of your condition as well as its impact on your ability to function at your job.