

# GI Disorders—Crohn's Disease

## An overview for school professionals

**Crohn's Disease** is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), characterized by inflammation of the digestive/gastrointestinal tract.

### What are some common symptoms of Crohn's Disease?

- frequent diarrhea
- stomach pain or cramping
- fevers
- fatigue or unexplained tiredness
- blood in your child's stool
- anemia or low iron levels
- weight loss
- joint, skin or eye irritations

### What type of support plan is appropriate for a student with Crohn's Disease?

Students with Crohn's should have a 504 plan. The diagnosis of **Crohn's Disease** gives reasonable cause to bypass the SST process, which will allow you to provide immediate accommodations to the student. All teachers who provide instruction for your student should be made aware of these accommodations.

### What accommodations are necessary for a student with Crohn's?

**ATTENDANCE:** Students with Crohn's frequently miss school. They may require hospitalizations from time to time, sometimes for several weeks. Surgery may be necessary to remove diseased intestine or to alleviate a particular complication. Although some students may appear to be well, they can actually be quite ill.

- full-time and intermittent hospital homebound services
- suspension of attendance requirements for absences due to medical appointments and illness, including allowances for student to participate in extra-curricular programs and events without penalty due to absences.
- partial-day attendance, as necessary

**ASSIGNMENTS:** It is important for teacher and parents to ensure that student receive assignments in a timely manner so student does not get further behind. It may also take the student with ulcerative colitis longer to complete assignments due to fatigue, pain, and/or frequent trips to the restroom.

- a system for providing advance assignments to the parent or student for absences due to planned medical appointments
- a system for providing make-up assignments in a timely manner when patient is absent due to illness or hospitalization
- modified assignments: Shorten assignments to emphasize mastery and to limit repetition.
- extra time to make up missed assignments

- "stop the clock" testing: When taking an exam, student may need to take breaks due to pain or bowel urgency. Test time will be extended by the amount of time that the student is away from exam.

**FATIGUE:** Medications and active disease symptoms may contribute to sleep deprivation and fatigue.

- extra time to complete work and tests, including standardized tests
- rest periods during physical activity, including PE class, as needed
- a location provided for student to lie down, as needed
- extra set of books for home and another set kept in classroom(s) to minimize the need to carry heavy books, and for student to have them available in case of sudden onset of illness

**RESTROOM:** Students with active disease symptoms may need to use the bathroom many times per day, often urgently, in order to avoid fecal incontinence.

***PLEASE! NEVER STOP A STUDENT WITH CROHN'S DISEASE FROM USING THE RESTROOM!***

- unlimited bathroom privileges, including a system for the student to go to the bathroom without having to draw attention to himself. (Example: Give free restroom privileges designated by a hand signal or a permanent restroom pass.)
- access to private restroom
- private place to change clothes
- extended time in the restroom
- alternative seating to accommodate easy access to classroom exits

**NUTRITION AND HYDRATION:** Frequent bowel movements and medication contribute to loss of fluids.

- permission to eat snacks at the desk or to leave class and have them in a designated location, as needed
- permission to carry and drink fluids throughout the day
- permission to carry supply bag with wet wipes, and other supplies throughout the day

The list of accommodations above is not meant to be exhaustive; each student's unique needs will dictate the appropriate accommodations to be listed in his/her 504 plan.