

KNOW YOUR STUDENT

FACT SHEETS TO GUIDE THE
LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT
OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS



Crohn's disease

Definition

Crohn's Disease is an ongoing inflammatory disorder of the digestive tract. This disease affects the small intestine causing inflammation, swelling and pain. The swelling forces the intestines to empty frequently, resulting in diarrhea. Crohn's Disease is difficult to diagnose as symptoms are similar to other intestinal disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome and ulcerative colitis.

Crohn's Disease affects both men and women equally. Although it can be diagnosed across all age groups, it is more common in the 20 to 30 year age group. The symptoms for Crohn's Disease are wide and varied. The most common symptoms of Crohn's Disease may include the following:

- cramping and abdominal pain;
- diarrhea;
- bloating and gas;
- rectal bleeding;
- weight loss;
- joint pain/arthritis;
- fever.

Impact on training and assessment

The impact of Crohn's Disease on a learner will vary according to the range and severity of their symptoms, treatment and individual self-care and management of their condition. However, stomach upset and pain, related to digestive difficulties are the most common symptoms. The student may need frequent trips to the toilet and/or need to leave class early or arrive late. Be conscious of the student's dignity and avoid drawing attention to their health complications.

Learners who have Crohn's Disease may experience difficulty with:

- concentration and attention;
- anxiety;
- fatigue/tiredness;

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- irritability;
- limited attendance as a result of symptoms.

Delivery and assessment strategies

The following strategies are suggestions. Each student with Crohn's Disease will have their own individual support and learning needs and it's recommended as a first step, that you ask them and/or their family or support network (if such a network is present and accessible) what the best ways to support their learning is.

When liaising with anyone other than the student directly, ensure you maintain confidentiality, as per TAFE Queensland Privacy Policy.

Presenting and communicating information

- Discuss with the learner what they would like to do if symptoms occur in the training environment.
- Prepare and arrange for information to be accessible through electronic format and/or provide printed material.
- Provide opportunity for repetition of information.
- Provide opportunity for frequent breaks.
- Be understanding when the learner needs to leave the classroom with little or no warning and/or if they arrive late.
- Avoid targeting the learner with questions and reading aloud.
- Be aware that the learner's social relationships may be affected due to the symptoms of the disease.
- Review learners progress periodically.
- If under 18, involve parents through daily communication regarding learner's management and self-care.

Utilising technology to maximize student engagement

- A reader/scribe can assist learners with reading and writing material.
- Learning materials and information can be converted into formats that are accessible for the learner e.g. audio files (such as MP3 format), Braille (a tactile reading and writing code, which is read using the fingers) or large print.
- Screen reading software such as Job Access With Speech (JAWS) reads electronic material aloud to the user. It provides audible access to electronic information, software applications and the internet.

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- Electronic magnification devices are available in portable, transportable, desktop and laptop based forms. They magnify or scan print based materials and objects.
- Magnification software (e.g. Microsoft Magnifier, ZoomText) enlarges the whole computer screen including text and application buttons / navigation.
- Anti-glare screens and reducing the brightness or changing the contrast of computer screens can benefit.
- Connect (also referred to as Desire2Learn) has numerous options to increase accessibility to information provided within Connect. Options such as screen readers, keyboard-only navigation, colour contrast accessibility features and zooming options are all available within Connect. Educators can access information about these options at <https://connect.tafeqld.edu.au/shared/help/student/content/en/Accessibility.html>.
- Audio recording of training delivery or note taking (a person or digital note taker such as the Neo Notetaker) to assist learners with handwriting difficulties and / or with mishearing and misquoting.
- A Disability Coach or Disability Support Worker can assist the learner with planning and organizing. The benefit to requesting a Disability Coach/Support Worker is that they may be able to look holistically at the support and learning needs of the student and provide some helpful ideas regarding software, or education strategies to help increase the student's understanding, participation and engagement.

All of the delivery strategies may be of assistance for assessment

- Utilise a variety of assessment methods to give learners maximum opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge (e.g. slide presentations, verbal assessment/oral report, demonstration and taped interviews).
- Defer assessments and tests especially if learner is hospitalized.
- Be flexible with time extensions for tests and assessments.
- Speak to the student to find out what is helpful to them, with regard to assessment accommodations. It may be necessary for the process of reasonable adjustment to be used to have questions read to them and note-takes used.

References

- Health Direct 'Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis' (2009 & 2016), http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Crohn_s_Disease
- Medicine Net (2009 & 2016), http://www.medicinenet.com/crohns_disease/article.htm
- Royal Children's Hospital (2009 & 2016). Supporting a student with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, http://www.rch.org.au/emplibrary/edinst/Supporting_a_student_with_Crohn's_disease_or_ulcerative_colitis.pdf

Further Resources

- Healing Well (2016). Introduction to Crohn's Disease, <http://www.healingwell.com/library/ibd/info1.asp>
- National Digestive Diseases Information Clearing House (NDDIC) (2016), <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/crohns/>